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# CONSCIOUSNESS, MIND AND BODY

*Investigating Sartre's view on human being:  
"What lies at the heart of man?"*

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## ABSTRACT

“What lies at the heart of human being?” That is the central theme of this paper. An investigation into human being can be approached in many ways. Mine is different than for instance psychology, anthropology, social science and biology. It is more in the direction of the metaphorical use of the expression “at the heart”: Having “her heart in it” (being committed, motivated, truly interested): Being a leader “with heart” (being generous, emphatic, accepting): A “heartfelt truth” (an intuitive truth): “At heart” (the central or innermost part – the core – the essential or most vital part of something). Already by this I indicate the direction of my investigation into the human being. It is not a scientific or analytical investigation. It is existential. It is about gaining a better understanding of human *being* in the world. How are we doing - can we do better? This question is lying underneath throughout the work. I believe the answers lies in the concept “consciousness”.

Sartre will be central in this paper. In his work “Being and Nothingness” I have found a brilliant approach to my questions - a unique, existentialistic way of viewing “man-in-the-world”. “Freedom” is a key-world in this context. I want to reach out to everyone with my writings, so I have exerted myself keeping it simple and accessible, and bringing the reader into the field of investigation step by step – going through some historical views and Sartre’s theory on human being in the world. But I take it even further; what is the mind’s place in the picture? It is such a central feature of man – it is what makes us feel different than the rest of creation. So in my search for the heart of human being I end up reflecting on issues concerning mind versus consciousness; rational knowingness versus intuitive immediacy; belief systems versus freedom.

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## I: INTRODUCTION

When we talk about “human being” we often think of human *nature* in its more scientific sense – for instance biological, psychological, anthropological and behavioral descriptions. Man is observing man as objectively as possible, looking for common features - trying to make sense of our manifold and complex nature. These kinds of descriptions often paint a picture of man being somewhat determined and predictable – explained physicalistic through genetics, neurology, endorphin systems, etc. - and psychological through mental functions, behavioral patterns, personality structures etc. – and otherwise through our social structures, belief-systems, interaction etc. It can be a rather mechanical picture, our bodily and psychic and social “settings” being attained by evolution, ancestors/parents, environments and experiences in life.

This kind of description does not give much room for self-determination and agency; the innermost and free motivating powers of the “I” at the heart of our being. It becomes an epiphenomenon with no real “saying” in the world; no causal powers. It is more like a shadow being or an illusion of being. We are in fact always acted upon by the world – that is what makes us going; human beings are just reacting based on what happens to them. Freedom is a deceiving idea of man; we are more ruled by nature than we want to believe.

I will through the eyes of Sartre and my own reflections try to paint another picture of man. We like to believe we are determined in some way; “it is my past, my genes, my sex, my upbringing, my culture, my religion”; “it is demanded of me, I have to, it is my duty; I cannot help it, I cannot change...” I could continue this line of thought forever. We think like this all the time. It is not just in theory; we make it real! But the question is; does it *have to* be real? Is this in fact all we are and can be? Or is it more to man than science has discovered? Sartre is indeed painting a very different picture of man than what we often see and hear. And it makes much more sense to me than the explanations biologists and psychiatrists and the like has come up with.

I am more than biology with an advanced computer brain. I am more than a limited and deterministic nature. And this cannot be just an illusion; just look to human being! Look at what we really are and what we have achieved! Yes, our ability to perceive, remember,

reflect/analyze, deduce, conclude and act upon information and reproduce the past (the rational human) can fit into such a description; that *can* be the workings of some sort of advanced mechanistic nature. But we are so much more: We are beings with inner motivations, aspirations, passions which we follow and fulfill - even though it might not make much sense to our (Darwinist-evolutionary) mind; even though it goes against our "nature". We experience inspiration and have creative, triumphant discoveries which are difficult to explain as effects of some outer influence. We ask big questions about where we come from and why we are here; the meaning of life and what is our place in this world? We are reflecting on ourselves and our togetherness; perceiving ourselves and wondering - seeing beyond our own "little life" towards the "bigger picture" – wanting to change – wanting to be the best we can be – reaching beyond ourselves.

Nature just "is"; it doesn't reflect upon anything. It is what it is and that's it. We're not. We want more, or less, or something completely different. We want to overcome/raise beyond that which seems to determine us. Or; put in the words of Jean-Jacques Rousseau:

*"It is a grand and beautiful sight to see man emerge somehow from nothing by his own efforts; dissipate, by the light of his reason, the shadows in which nature had enveloped him; rise above himself; soar by means of his mind into the heavenly regions; traverse, like the sun, the vast expanse of the universe with giant steps; and, what is even grander and more difficult, return to himself in order to study man and know his nature, his duties, and his end."* (Rousseau:3)

Sartre brings human consciousness and freedom into the picture in a very intriguing and plausible way. Not making human beings animal, dualistic, mysterious or supernatural. Not reducing the "I" to an epiphenomenon or making it unexplainable and metaphysical. His explanations is quite common sense and recognizable. I want to make sense of his view because I believe Sartre's theory contains deep wisdom, making it possible to get to the core of our being-in-the-world. But first I will give an overview of some traditional views and debates on human being, to make it easier to follow Sartre's brilliant reflections as well as my own views on the matter.

## II: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### (i) Views on human nature:

To make one thing clear right from the start: I don't believe that the physicalistic and psychological views of human being which I described in the introduction are wrong. I'm just saying that it probably is more to us than the features they suggest; they might not be telling the whole story of man. And I know many scientists think so too. Common sense tells us we are more than our body and brain – there is more to us than the story of physical evolution. Empiric science can explain much about how our body works and how our minds function - and why, but there is still a lot about human being, living, behavior and abilities that do not fit into such theories.

Our religious and spiritual belief systems have developed from such an intuition; there is more to us than reach the eye. They have taken the explanation in the direction of something “beyond” – something non-natural and the like, though. It seems like this kind of wonder and creativity has been part of our lives for a long time<sup>1</sup>. We have questioned the world we live in, and explained things by believing in a spirit-world. Man has also made themselves part of such a spiritual story, and this usually takes the form of some kind of substance dualism; we have an eternal “soul” and that is something completely different from the “animal” body of ours. The soul is like another form of “substance” or life – an “entity” in its own right – independent of this physical world.

**Aristotle** is an example of a famous philosopher who very early in the history of philosophy wanted a less mythical/mysterious and more natural/empirical explanation of the special human features.

“We have said, for instance, that one (part) of the soul is non-rational, while one has reason. Are these distinguished as parts of a body and is everything divisible into parts? Or are they two (only) in definition, and inseparable by nature, as the convex and the concave are in a surface?” (Aristotle: Part II,13)

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<sup>1</sup> I think here for instance on cave paintings indicating that we even on such a primitive level was interested in more than just survival, reproducing etc.

According to Aristotle, our bodies are like plants; we grow and nurture of what the earth has to offer us (vegetative life), but we are also like animals “clashing and struggling with reason” - with our impulses and affections - which can make us “go astray”. We feel and fight and reproduce (animal life). But unlike the rest of the creation human beings also have reason, which is the master. The non-rational part(s) obeys reason (in “the continent person”); they “listen to reason” as we often say (rational life). It is like several “souls”, but we do not see or understand them separately. Just like we do not spend time worrying about how the wax of a candle and its shape can be one; we see ourselves as one thing. Form and matter are inseparable in understanding things. Soul and body are inseparable in understanding human being. Like the convex and concave.

To take it a bit further, and into modern times (and vocabulary): To understand a paper – or a tree is to understand more than one thing about it. We automatically understand it multiple-dimensionally, one could say. We know that there is more to the being than meets the eye. The paper has two sides. And even though we do not see the back side we know it’s there, because that is what makes it “a paper”. The tree is three-dimensional, and it might look very different from another point of view – or in another season. And it looks very different from other kinds of trees. But we still know it’s a tree - and *this* particular tree. We do not need to analyze anything to know it. We just know.

To take it even further: We know we stand before a human being and not a statue or a robot. How do we know? We sense it somehow; it’s a being with a soul; a “rational” being (to use Aristotle’s term)... just like me – unlike the statue – or an animal (ape). Other human beings are in many respects very different from me; in the physical and psychological traits; the way they look – the clothing – the living and being – the personality and dreams and motivations and interests etc. But we sense a “familiarity” we cannot perceive. What we perceive is just the matter; the outside. What we “just know” is that there is more to this being than meets the eye.

**Descartes** is a philosopher who argued very brilliantly for the existent of the “I”. He searched for a solid fundament for knowledge – something which cannot be doubted. He wanted another approach to knowledge than the logically and theologically arguments and

discussions (belief against belief) of his times. He turned inwards instead - questioning every belief he ever had<sup>2</sup>. And through his search he found that no matter how skeptical he was - no matter how close to the “nothingness” he got, he could not deny that he existed. He was the one doubting. But he had doubted his body too, so what exactly is I who doubt? If it is not an extended thing, it has to be my thinking, he concluded; even though I doubt - I close my eyes and there’s nothing - still I’m here, thinking doubtful thoughts (or understand, deny, are willing, imagine, are aware/sense). The fact that I think (etc.) is in other words necessary true – for me - no matter what.

It can be seen as an argument for the non-reducible existence of the “I am” – this special human feature. But unfortunately, Descartes ended up with the body-and-soul dichotomy. He never managed to incorporate the thinking-and-perceiving mind into the being-in-the-world with/through the body. He could only “make a probable conjecture that the body exist”. I am a thinking thing, with *an idea of* (through imagination) an extended body, and “it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it.” (Descartes: Meditation VI) Thereby the soul became a mysterious entity/substance of its own. Descartes' rationalism holds that true knowledge is arrived at by careful deduction from self-evident ideas of the mind. The rationale is primary<sup>3</sup> - or the soul. The bodily, animal, instinctive and somewhat wild/untamed *nature* is something we have to overcome in order for us to reach our enlightened, civil, ethical, virtual and just “*rationale*”.

**After Descartes**, many followed up on the historical line of thought and took it very far (in the western part of the world at least); we are just advanced creatures at the heart of our being – only focused on and motivated by our own survival – being destructive (even the Earth herself we destroy, some would claim) if it suits our own needs. Therefore we are in need of reason, control and cultivation. A biologist once asked: “We all carry within us ‘the

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<sup>2</sup> A universal doubt, where he convinced himself that there is absolutely nothing in the world. Not because he really believed it to be so (he was no skepticist), but as an exercise – a tool, so he could find a truthful fundament for knowledge about the world.

<sup>3</sup> Empiricism holds the opposite view; knowledge comes from induction based on observation and experience. The mind *receives* information from the physical senses (facts).



caveman in our heart', so how can morality ever win?!” Many philosophers have described human beings with similar dichotomies; nature against reason<sup>4</sup>:

- > Desires/inclinations against reason/duty (understood as self-imposed lawful behavior)<sup>5</sup>
- > The Aesthetic (irresponsible; indulging) against The Ethical (responsible; engaging)<sup>6</sup>
- > Dionysus (creative, amoral, irrational) vs. Apollo (reasonable, analytical, structured)<sup>7</sup>.

I have often asked myself; is this how we are *at our core*? Are we destined to always have to fight this dualism – fight a nature which is selfish, irresponsible and amoral in order to become good, reasonable, responsible and sympathetic? Do we really need standards and restrains – threats and punishments – control-mechanisms and limitations of all kinds – in us and between us and around us? Do we need all the rules and regulations which tell us about right and wrong, and which leads to guilt and shame and doubt? Do we really need to *learn* how to live and behave – do we need to be forced and threatened? Is it impossible to get to an inner reconciliation; a totality of being? Can we transcend this belief – this idea of an inner cleavage; nature-against-knowledge / body-against-soul? Or will we forever be fighting our selves and each other, and thereby punishing and controlling our self and each other? Never really trusting anyone – at least our selves; believing our “free will” is destructive more than anything else. Is this all we can be? I believe not. Just look at our children: Anyone who has followed a child from birth will probably agree with the fact that we are born pure,

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<sup>4</sup> A political/social example of this kind of thinking we find in the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes’ “Leviathan” (1651). Our anarchistic and wild “state of nature” makes it necessary to give up our natural rights and become less free by submitting to contract/law/government.

<sup>5</sup> Immanuel Kant: “Kritik der praktischen Vernunft” (1788). Kant wanted to overrule nature to gain *freedom* and not only to “be good” (or any such religious-moral motivation). His project was (amongst others) to explain the possibility and actuality of transcendental freedom against natural necessity.

<sup>6</sup> Søren Kierkegaard: “Enten-Eller” (1843) is one of several books where he describes this distinction which includes a third way of being/living – the highest; The Religious. He has a different perspective on religion than the church of his time, though.

<sup>7</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche: “The Birth of Tragedy” (1872). Nietzsche wanted to *integrate* the Dionysian nature of man – not overcome it. That would be to end up with a “slave-morality”, which removes life from man. For Nietzsche there was nothing elevated or great about a pure, Apollonian nature. It just disempower man.

innocent, open-minded, accepting, aware and fearless – meeting the world and others unconditionally, curious and trusting. It is our “cultivation” which forms us into something different than this. We gain knowledge and are told stories and become clever and pretty defensive adults - maybe not as wise and independent as we like to think – at least when it comes to *living*? Maybe cleverness and knowledge is not the peak of consciousness-evolution after all? We have already become quite good at using our mind, but that hasn’t necessarily brought us the life we wish for. What is it we still lack? I think the key-word here is ‘consciousness’. But there is different ways of using this term, so I will make clear what I mean (and don’t mean) by ‘consciousness’ in this paper:

- The commonsensical meaning of the term ‘consciousness’ could for instance be simply associated with the state of being awake; sensing, perceiving etc. – in opposition to sleeping or being unconscious (and even opposed to the subconscious for those who know psychological terms). This use would also include animals as conscious beings.
- Others might oppose to that; consciousness is a purely human thing. It is the ability to reflect on ones environment and gain knowledge. It includes an understanding of ones past/future, and of oneself. This places consciousness in the rational, intelligent, analytical and advanced human mind with its belief-systems.
- Others again would disagree because they regard consciousness as self-awareness; the ability to feel or perceive immediate and subjectively<sup>8</sup>. It is living and being - not knowing and judging. It is a spontaneous sensibility – a subtle presence in the now in the world. It is self-empowerment and freedom of choice. This is how I will use the expression here.

Modern neuroscience still has problems understanding how consciousness can result from brain functions, but they keep looking. Science can explain much of what is going on

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<sup>8</sup> Isn’t the mind a part of the sensing? one might object. Well – yes. Without the brain we couldn’t make much sense of the world. But the immediate experience of it is not the workings of the mind, I will claim. It is an experience of the body as a whole. But we are so quick to let the mind interfere - with its valuations, judgments, definitions and analyzes; we miss the immediate experience. Sometimes not, though; for instance when listening to music: Then we can *live* the music – *feel* it in every cell - loosing track of time and space. Not thinking at all – just *experience* it – in the now.

between the brain/psyche and the body and its movements, and how our brain reacts to outer impressions and stimulations. But the specific human quality of *initiating or starting* processes (seemingly without any previous outer stimulation) - that is still a mystery; the “agency” of human beings. Even more mysterious is the idea of an eternal soul, divinity, spirit or the like; consciousness not really being of this world – only very loosely connected to the material body of the human being. So far this is only a religious belief or a spiritual idea not possible to verify/prove, so to include that in an explanation won’t explain anything – it would be pure speculations feeding old belief-systems. So, I will try to avoid the word ‘soul’; it is too easy to associate it with something religious/spiritual (or with something purely rational if associated with certain philosophers). And even though many normally think of the mind and consciousness as the same, I will claim it is not. When I talk about our cognitive and rational brain-faculties, I will use words like cogito/mind/psyche/rationality (like Sartre does). Consciousness is thereby reserved for another feature of human being – a region of being which I might also call ‘the self’/‘the I’/‘I am’ and the like.

## **(ii) Views on man-in-the-world; realism and idealism:**

Sartre is not interested in investigating man as such – in isolation. That is not possible he will claim (why will be clearer in what follows). Our relation to the world is in other words an essential part of our being, so when Sartre starts his investigation of “man-in-the-world” he compare/oppose it to the debate between idealism and realism. This is a debate about how to understand our being in the world. Where do our beliefs originate from? Do we project ourselves out and “make” them our reality, or do we receive “true” information from “out there” which becomes our beliefs? To get into Sartre’s sometimes complex (or maybe just unusual) mindset/thoughts, I will therefore give a short comment on this debate.

Roughly said **realism**<sup>9</sup> claims that the only thing we can truly prove to exist is matter; objects we can perceive, touch etc. The real are physical things occupying a space, with properties like size, shape, texture and different qualities like colors. And it is there – as reality – independent of us. With such a view, consciousness becomes hard to explain as anything but

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<sup>9</sup> I don’t know if this is exactly how Sartre uses the term ‘realism’. He is not defining it explicitly. But this way of explaining it works with Sartre’s arguments against a completely realistic view of the world.

an epiphenomenon – an effect of matter; explainable by and reducible to physical features of the human (for instance the brain and its measurable functions). This kind of naïve realism could be said to be a view in accordance with our everyday experience/common sense. What we perceive is what exists. It is there before us - we “take in” this reality and make it our knowledge.

Opposed to realism is the **idealist** position, which claims the primacy of human thoughts or beliefs – not the objects of the world. The mind constitutes existence; our ideas make up/compose the reality (which might even be located only in our minds). Berkeley is one holding such a view, but also Kant is often seen (at least partly) idealistic - on the level of knowledge: He is not denying the existence of “the thing as such”, but at the same time he holds that we can only get knowledge of “the thing for us”. Our reason makes them the way they appear to us; we organize or process the information we receive of the world through our “mindset”; through transcendental forms and categories – like time and space and causality. We cannot ever reach “the thing as such”. It is “for us” the information about the world is meaningful – processed through our mindset. We influence what we perceive, in other words, and cannot get around this; we cannot really know what is “out there” or if anything is there at all...

According to Sartre, neither the realistic nor the idealistic solution can fully explain man-in-the-world. For instance; the experience of pleasure cannot have a purely **realistic** explanation, according to Sartre: “Consciousness (awareness) of pleasure is *constitutive* of the (experience of) pleasure as the very mode of its own existence; as the material of which it is made” (Sartre:10). Pleasure is of us and cannot exist without our consciousness of pleasure. It is not something I only passively receive (or is being inflicted by) from the outside – it is *my* pleasure. But on the other hand **idealism** must be avoided as the explanation: “Pleasure must not disappear behind its own self-consciousness”. “It is a concrete event, full and absolute.” (Sartre:16) It cannot be an *experience* if it is from my self alone. Then the phenomenon would be transparent; it would be without the resistance/tension which is needed for it to be more than a thought or an idea or something

imagined. The pleasure is mine, but it would not be a real and concrete experience of pleasure without my intercourse with the world<sup>10</sup>.

I can give an example: I and my friends see chocolate on the table. The chocolate is *there*, and we can agree on where it is and what it is and how it looks and tastes and feels etc. That is a fact of the world. But we can disagree on our personal experience of it. What the sight does to us – what meaning it has to us. I crave it and know I can enjoy it with no remorse. My friend avoids it because she is on a diet or is allergic or something. Another friend might feel disgust because she doesn't like chocolate. It is sickening to her - just looking at it. In other words: Consciousness is real and the chocolate is real for "man-in-the-world". The experiences of craving and fear and disgust are individual, they are mine and yours, but just as real for us as the chocolate on the table. These experiences wouldn't have come to be if we hadn't been before the chocolate in our manifold ways. But, if it wasn't for the chocolate being there before us, the craving and fear and disgust would not appear in us. It is like Aristotle's convex and concave...

Here Sartre could be said to start his investigation of man-in-the-world, 'man' being the central issue for him. His interest is in other words not to investigate the properties etc. of the physical world as such. He doesn't discuss or investigate questions about subject- vs. object-matter, what exists or anything like that. He doesn't want to "prove" anything – not even the existence of consciousness. His project is to explain "being", and his starting point is man-in-the-world: Our experiences as 1) conscious beings in 2) a perceivable, real world. In the end of the introduction he asks:

"What is the ultimate meaning of the two types of being? For what reasons do they both belong to *being* in general? What is the meaning of that being which includes within itself these two radically separated regions of being? If idealism and realism both fail to explain the relations which *in fact* unite these regions which *in theory* are without communication, what other solution can we find for this problem?" (Sartre:23)

Sartre is searching for the solution to the mystery man-in-the-world by choosing a different approach than those in the realism-idealism-debate. This way of viewing the world is called

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<sup>10</sup> It is possible to experience pleasure from imagination alone, but the question is; isn't it necessary to have experienced it before, to have a remembrance of something to imagining (and experience *again*)? And will the imagined experience be as strong as "the real thing"?

existentialism, and to get even closer to Sartre's mind-set I will give a short introduction to this philosophical direction:

### **(iii) Existentialism:**

Existentialism is a philosophical direction where human living and development is in focus. The typical existentialist claim is usually something like this: Man going from being determined, immature, irresponsible and unconscious (and maybe even a lazy, false coward) - to being empowered, free/autonomous, authentic/genuine and in mastery/power over oneself. This is a central, existentialistic assertion; the truth is within each and one of us – not in external, universal/objective standards - standards “known” by priests or “found” by science or “decided” by society or recommended by “experts”. Most of us are following others, without really reflecting on it – questioning it, but we have the potential of becoming more conscious, I would say (the way I choose to use the word).

Edmund Husserl<sup>11</sup> developed a phenomenological existentialism which Sartre is commenting throughout his own work. Like Sartre, Husserl wasn't very happy with earlier theories about the relation between man and the world, and especially the dualistic idea of subjects and objects just doesn't hold. So Husserl tries another approach, with focus on “existences”. That puts everything on the same level, so to speak, with man in the centre. Sartre owes a lot to Husserl and his approach to human being, but in the end also Husserl failed according to Sartre. The theory is too idealistic - the reality of the world gets lost in Husserl's phenomenological, transcendental reflection on the content of our mental acts. Everything gets subjective, but it was nonetheless a grand step in the right direction to put everything on the level of ‘existences’ and to describe our consciousness as an act and an access – not primarily as a “container” (of ideas and beliefs).

Martin Heidegger<sup>12</sup> modified the approach of Husserl (also objecting to his idealism). Sartre owes even more to him. But also Heidegger failed to overcome the man-world-gap, according to Sartre. In Heidegger's theory the human being is lost in the fabric and

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<sup>11</sup> Edmund Husserl: *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phäononologischen Philosophie*, (1913)

<sup>12</sup> Martin Heidegger: *Sein und Zeit*, (1927)

instrumentality of the world. He seeks to make the “being” explicit, clear and distinct by projecting everything out into the world (the opposite of reflecting on it in an introspective manner). But what becomes of consciousness in this picture? It seems to be only a passing experience? We wake up for an instant because of anxiety, but then we fall back into the “das man” (with a new clarity though). The loneliness of the real and free “I” is too much for human beings. We have to flee it – back into the known and predictable and determinate being-in-the-world (as part of a social setting - dictated by the anonymous ‘public’ or ‘them’). There we find the meaning of being – not in the emptiness of the real. This is not good enough for Sartre.

So he is carrying out his investigation in a typical existentialistic way: The most important questions in life are not accessible through reason or science (alone). In existentialism, the central issue can roughly speaking be said to be *life* – searching for insight into uniquely human issues (such as self-identity, aloneness, being free and responsible, mastering our own lives etc) by looking at how we actually live and exist and experience - being in the midst of life (not observing and describing it). Very often examples and stories from everyday-life are used, and it can sometimes be very unsystematic – using dialogues, parables, and other literary forms (which for instance Kierkegaard and Nietzsche are famous examples of). But it is a deliberate approach. To understand man-in-the-world the distance of the dualism must be overcome, and maybe writings from the heart in the midst of life give a better understanding of the phenomenon than analytical descriptions and scientific investigations. The existentialist partakes in life – and then he shares the experiences with the reader.

Existentialism is at its best, I think, when it moves/stirs up feelings – provokes our beliefs and wakes us up to new possibilities; making us *experience* the inner truth, and thereby gain insights into our own lives. Despite their anti-rational position, however, most existentialists cannot be said to be irrational (in the sense of denying all validity to rational thought). It is brilliant philosophy very well argued for and plausible – and not least; recognizable (on a common sense-level). But it can also be challenging at times. Husserl’s idealistic phenomenology is much less reachable than existentialism, I would say, but he makes a point that can be said to be valid for Sartre’s work too:

“So much is correct, that any transcendental philosophy must, and with essential necessity, create extraordinary difficulties for the natural man's understanding - for "common sense" - and thus for all of us, since we cannot avoid having to rise from the natural ground to the transcendental region. The complete inversion of the natural stance of life, thus into an "unnatural" one, places the greatest conceivable demands upon philosophical resolve and consistency. Natural human understanding and the objectivism rooted in it will view every transcendental philosophy as a flighty eccentricity, its wisdom as useless foolishness; or it will interpret it as a psychology which seeks to convince itself that it is not psychology. No one who is truly receptive to philosophy is ever frightened off by difficulties. But modern man, as man shaped by science, demands insight; and thus, as the image of sight correctly suggest, he demands the self-evidence of "seeing" the goals and the ways to them and every step along the way. The way may be long, and many years of toilsome study may be necessary; this is true in mathematics, but it does not frighten him whose life-interest is mathematics. The great transcendental philosophies did not satisfy the scientific need for such self-evidence, and for this reason their ways of thinking were abandoned”. (Husserl: Part IIIB)

It can indeed take some effort to get the picture. It reminds me of Descartes' book “Meditations”. There he describes very vividly how difficult it is for him to let go of old beliefs – to reach the famous, subjective “I think, I am” (cogito ergo sum). Our habits and prejudiced conceptions and scientific perspective of naïve realism get in the way. With some efforts it is possible though, to let go of old habits and thought-patterns and get a grip on this (for many) new way of explaining the phenomenon “man-in-the-world”<sup>13</sup>.

### III: SARTRE'S MAN-IN-THE-WORLD

#### (i) Bridging the gap

It is important to have a clear idea of where in the landscape of investigation Sartre is - that is to say; on what level/in what perspective Sartre is doing his research. It is very easy to fall back on common/old conceptions and methods with its empiric and dualistic approach, so I stress the importance of keeping in mind the following (in danger of repeating myself): His main focus is *human being* in the world – not to get knowledge of objects and subjects. He is not investigating attributes and qualities – outer characteristics and possible hidden

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<sup>13</sup> I believe the reason for Sartre's (and previously mentioned philosophers in his tradition) use of terms like 'phenomenon' and 'transcendent' and 'being-in-the-world' etc. instead of the term 'object' vs. 'subject' is just to take our thoughts in new directions – help us from falling into old habits of thinking...



essences<sup>14</sup>. It is not about defining and describing and categorizing things and humans and what they might “contain”. Sartre is not interested in the study of the objects and subjects in the world by isolating them and investigating their parts<sup>15</sup>, the way they do in physical<sup>16</sup> and psychological<sup>17</sup> science for instance. To study being is a very different approach. Here our experience of the world is in the center of the investigation.

In a way he could be said to continue the Cartesian<sup>18</sup> tradition of investigating the “I” (followed up by for instance Kant), but their focus was more epistemological (how do we get knowledge of the world?) and descriptive (human faculties/content). But isn’t that a central part of human being, one could ask; “gaining knowledge” – “using our abilities”? Yes, but then I will reply that instead of describing ‘knowledge’ and ‘abilities’, Sartre wants to reach to the heart of the ‘gaining’ and ‘using’-part of the sentences (as an example). That is what our *being* is about - *in the midst of life*. We are part of nature, but we are not just nature; we are conscious beings very different from all other parts of the fabric of the world. Sartre wants to investigate the human consciousness *through* the fabric of the world, and thereby avoid the not so plausible idealism, dualism or realism. According to Sartre Descartes failed to bridge the gap, and Husserl and Heidegger failed to grasp the whole picture of man-in-the-world as an intertwined phenomenon. But can he really do better? Is it possible to

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<sup>14</sup> Sartre gives an example: “Force, for example, is not a metaphysical conatus of an unknown kind which hides behind its effects (accelerations, deviations, etc.); it is the totality of these effects.” ...”no action indicates anything which is behind itself; it indicates only itself and the total series.” (p. 1)

<sup>15</sup> We never perceive and understand things as separated bits and pieces – they are seen in connection with other things and in a setting/a situation; as a total, phenomenal package of meaning. And focusing on a specific thing implies only that it ‘stands out’ for us – it has our attention in the midst of all the phenomena in our view. That makes sense to the term ‘transcendent’, since the transcendent in a way is being lifted out of the masses of things because we give it our attention.

<sup>16</sup> To find each separate ‘bit’ of reality has become a very difficult and complicated task anyway. Quantum mechanic changes the picture. The physical world might not be so easy to understand as one thought in the traditional view of seeing the world as a mechanical watch built up of atoms; every part determined and predictable with cause and effect according to known laws. The atom-hypothesis has been falsified and split into more and more tiny particles of strings and photons etc. The new quantum mechanic is unpredictable and inexplicable seen through the eyes of old belief-systems...

<sup>17</sup> I will say more about Sartre’s objection against Freud later, but I can mention here that Sartre objects to his splitting of the Self into different parts; id and ego.

<sup>18</sup> = René Descartes

explain the coexistence of these two ways of being in a more plausible way? Sartre wants to try:

"It appears that we have barred all doors and that we are now condemned to regard transcendent being and consciousness as two closed totalities without possible communication. It will be necessary to show that the problem allows a solution other than realism or idealism." (Sartre:20)

The reason for the failure of earlier theories is the *separation* of these two regions of being in the first place. That was the mistake of for instance Descartes; it is an abstraction. Our being is the concrete is the synthetic totality of "the man within the world" (:27), where "the relation of the regions of being is an original emergence". (:28)

## **(ii) The fabric of the world:**

To get a grip of the whole, everything has to be described on the same level. Because human is being, Sartre also sees the fabric of the world on the level of being. This is very unfamiliar to us. We don't think of a stone, for instance, as being. It is just a stone... But, if we look closer, it is being too. It is here – before me – existing in the world. Not in the same way I am (existence), but existing nevertheless. All things in the world are beings of the world – one way or another. And in order to understand the being of *man* we have to understand the being of the *world* we are part of (with our body and everything else around us). Sartre therefore gives a description of the being of the world, even though he doesn't like this approach at all; it can easily be misunderstood as a new dualism. The non-dualism of his theory will be clear, though, if we follow his line of thought.

The fabric of the world is that which appears for us. It is the manifest and material world with all its things – objects - beings. It is that which we perceive – sense – touch<sup>19</sup>. It is the reality of our world – end of story. Sartre sees no reason to include anything mysterious or hidden or ideal or "beyond" or anything like that to the story, and I like this approach: We are investigating life through being, so let us stick to our experience of it - keeping it simple and real.

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<sup>19</sup> ...and he would probably also include that which science finds out, even though we cannot perceive it with our human senses.

The fabric of the world is full positivity – solid, opaque, filled with itself. It is what it is without the ability to affirm, reflect or create. It knows no otherness. The world “in-itself” is something determined, positively given and closed around itself. It just is. It has no ability to fix the meaning or define or describe its being. It just is what it is. Like a stone. Or a tree; the tree never *questions* why it has the roots in the ground and cannot move like an animal or human being. It never *tries* to be anything different than it is. It doesn’t *wonder* why it “is” at all. I don’t think it *fears* that the sun and water which gives it life shall be gone. It doesn’t *mind* being used. It doesn’t *resist* anything. Or *secure* and *guard* itself. Or *plan* ahead. It doesn’t have *wants/a will*, or any kind of *agenda*. It just is - in itself – in its fullness. But I am the one perceiving it. So my experience of its being is what it is for me. The ‘in-itself’ and the ‘for-me’ is intertwined as a phenomenon – an experience. But nevertheless the tree is there in itself also; it has its own existence. It is what it is.

The existentialistic way of describing *any* being-in-itself is just like this, and I can clearly see the inheritance from Heidegger in Sartre: The *being* of the hammer, for instance, is also its instrumentality (for me). I can use it to get a picture up on the wall. For another human being it can be a weapon or a way to disassemble something or a beautiful antique object for a collection. The possibilities are multitude, and no one of the meanings can be said to be more “true” than another. But in-itself the hammer is what it is (with its primary and secondary qualities), and without the human context it is really not ‘a hammer’ at all – it is nothing but some wood and iron put together... To measure and study its “objective nature” or something like that has no meaning (other than maybe as an instrument for making it a better tool *for us*).

Our experience of being in the world is like this, and that includes the body: It is pumping blood and digesting automatically. It is fully determined by its surroundings; cause and effect. It is acted upon and is reacting to it. Spoiled meat makes it vomit to get rid of it. Without water and air it will die. This is not the perspective of *my* body, though. *My* body is viewed very different from *a* body by Sartre: *The* body is the perspective of a thing as part of the fabric of the world. Sartre describes it as “a certain living object composed of a nervous system, a brain, glands, digestive, respiratory, and circulatory organs whose very matter is capable of being analyzed chemically into atoms of hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus,

etc.” (Sartre:327) But, *for me* its being is its instrumentality – just as in the example of the hammer: “For the body which I have just described is not *my* body such as it is *for me*.”

I ask myself; how intertwined are these phenomenon actually (the in-itself and for-me)? Can the body survive without an “I” there to breathe the body? I’ve heard stories of bodies living without anyone ever getting in contact with any “I” in there. Very appropriate they call it vegetative living (Aristotle probably would agree on that). But vegetative bodies need machines to live, doesn’t they? I don’t think the body would survive “on its own”. If this is so, that would really be a verification of Sartre’s point; we cannot see the body and the “I” apart. The true perspective is “my body”, the same way we perceive the concave and convex as *one* phenomenon; intertwined and not separable on the level of *being*. It seems like the intuition can be right; the body ‘in-itself’ probably does not explain the whole story of the being of man.

This hammer is mine – it is my property – my thing. I can see the body the same way - as my body-thing. I can for instance see my body on a screen during a radioscopy (to use Sartre’s example:327), but that will be to see something outside of me - in the midst of the world. It will be something quite alien to me and not at all my *experience* of my being. I see other bodies too, so I can conclude that my body is constituted like the others. “And of course the physicians who have taken care of me, the surgeons who have operated on me, have been able to have direct experience with the body which I myself do not know. I do not disagree with them; I do not claim that I lack a brain, a heart, or a stomach. But it is most important to choose the *order* of our bits of knowledge.” (:327) The body can be perceived in two ways, in other words: “Either it is a thing among other things, or else it is that by which things are revealed to me.” (:328) Two perspectives, which both is part of my reality – two essentially different orders of reality. The leg can be this thing, and it can be *my* possibility of walking, running etc.

An important thing to understand concerning the “being-in-itself” is the determined nature of it; it is bound to its nature/the laws of nature. It is what it is for ever and ever – completely absorbed in its being without any escape - because it is unaware – it just is. The same goes for the body-in-itself. If I decide to hurt myself or kill myself the body cannot stop

me. The “I” can get second thoughts, but that is *me* hesitating – not the body. Or is that just an illusion; the idea/experience I have of having a choice? Is it really my body “commanding” me – “giving” me second thoughts - determining me? Is it my survival instincts ruling? Or maybe it’s explainable by my psychical constitution or my mental programming? So much can determine me.... Let us for the sake of this search assume for now it is so; I am a determinated being-in-itself. What then, can I make of the-man-in-the-world? We can examine this using an example of Sartre (:54), where I am facing a precipice. Looking at it from the perspective of being-in-itself, the precipice presents itself to me as to be avoided – through vertigo and fear. The cause and effect of determinism and nature sets in: Precipice - > Vertigo -> Fear of death. In face of fear the body reacts. Its reflex/instinct probably will be to back up/avoid the danger. The body and mind is programmed for survival<sup>20</sup>.

I am standing in front of the precipice, but instead of fear I’m feeling a need to throw myself into the void. That is against any animal survival-instinct, but it happens – people commit suicide. Can this act be explained through the determinism of the being-in-itself? It might – through beliefs imposed for instance<sup>21</sup>; some psychic diagnose; a mindset of completely giving up not seeing any other solution; fear or pain or despair so great that it “pushes me over the edge” so to speak. It makes sense to explain it this way, and we *like to* perceive it this way; “it’s because of my parents – my genes and inheritance – my painful past”...

Sartre calls this “man in action” (:60); man acting out through a “non-reflective consciousness in a structure of exigency in the world”. On this plane we do not question anything – we are just accepting things as they are – letting us being determined by that which we meet (and are) – that which is immediate before us (and in us; psychic and mental patterns for instance). We are part of our social environment the same way the tree is part of the natural environment:

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<sup>20</sup> Stories of animals falling into precipices in flocks/packs usually are about flight from fear – also instinct in other words.

<sup>21</sup> I’ve for instance heard of religious sects where everyone did commit suicide simultaneously. They probably have been affected from the outside – from each other or the leader or through brainwashing or the like.

“The immediate is the world with its urgency; and in this world where I engage myself, my acts cause values to spring up like partridges. My indignation has given to me the negative value “baseness”, my admiration has given the positive value “grandeur”. Above all my obedience to multitude of taboos, which is real, reveals these taboos to me as existing in fact. The bourgeois who call themselves “respectable citizens” do not become respectable as the result of contemplating moral values. Rather from the moment of their arising in the world they are thrown into a pattern of behavior the meaning of which is respectability. Thus respectability acquires a being; it is not put into question. Values are sown on my path as thousands of little real demands, like the signs which order us to keep off the grass.” (Sartre:62)

This is the description of a human who are a being-in-itself. Not reflecting on anything – just being automatically in that which he/she is “thrown into” through birth. Totally submerged in their (natural and moral) environments – not consider themselves in their original relation to the world. No agency - just ‘re-actions’ to outer demands and values of all kinds: The world “delivers” itself to the unreflective consciousness and things are “just happening”.

Let me give you another example of this; a story of a man in a world of demands – determined by his situation and nature - not being anything but that which he has always been and still is. In this case he is a working man. Every morning the alarm clock is telling him to go to work. He never reflects on his possibilities. He just set the alarm clock before sleep every night – automatically, because he has to go to work. It is just the way it is. He makes the demand of the alarm clock something real which determines him. Just the way his empty stomach tells him to eat. And his boss tells him what to do. Maybe a sense of duty is part of the story – and/or fear of lack and loss; psychological patterns. Maybe marriage “happened” to him... and children... because it’s the way of life. It’s how it is supposed to be and always has been. He is submerged in an expected and predictable tradition reproduced by such non-reflective actions. This is a very common way of life. Safe and lazy; comfortable and num; ignorant (existentialists can be very harsh in their descriptions...). Sartre calls this to be in bad faith:

### **(iii) Bad faith:**

‘Ignorance’ – that is a very appropriate description in this context. It indicates the choice of turning ones back to new knowledge – disregarding that which is *really* there – overlooking/missing it. It is a kind of indifference to it – not wanting to or caring to question anything. Maybe even fearing to get more clarity? Sartre claims that this is usually what

human beings choose; they choose the convenience of being determined – pretending to be a being-in-itself – rejecting all other possibilities - apprehending themselves through “a strict psychological determinism” (Sartre:55). This is an attitude in “bad faith”.

He won't call it lying, because that is often seen as a conscious tool of manipulating and misleading others. Bad faith is to lie to oneself. “One who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth.” (:72) It is self-delusion. It is an evanescent phenomenon, because we on a pre-reflective level “know” we are affecting our self with bad faith, but at the same time we conceal it. Sartre calls it a unitary structure of a single project: It is suppressed, or else the whole undertaking would fail. I cannot lie to myself if I'm conscious of my lying. It won't work; “the lie falls back and collapses beneath my look”. (:73) But it is not hidden in some unconscious complexes either. Bad faith is a psychic structure present for my consciousness – in my being-in-the-world. It is *my* doing – my choice, which I at any moment can “undo”. I am in other words not determined by inner forces I cannot control. It cannot be explained in duality (like Freud does), with a deceiver and a deceived as if two beings were fighting inside me – one conscious and another being alien to me.

“By the distinction between the “id” and the “ego”, Freud has cut the psychic whole into two. I *am* ego but I *am not* the id. I hold no privileged position in relation to my unconscious psyche. I *am* my own psychic phenomena in so far as I establish them in their conscious reality. For example I am the impulse to steal this or that book from this bookstall. I am an integral part of the impulse; I bring it to light and I determine myself hand-in-hand with it to commit the theft. But I *am not* those psychic facts, in so far as I receive them passively and am obliged to resort to hypotheses about their origin and their true meaning ... (for example) ... a process derived from self-punishment, which is attached more or less directly to an Oedipus complex. ... Finally, the discovery of this truth will necessitate the cooperation of the psychoanalyst, who appears as the *mediator* between my unconscious drives and my conscious life.” (Sartre:74)

Sartre object strongly to this kind of view on the “I” (which is very common also today). That would be to rely on the probability of scientific hypotheses about psychic facts – the “I” explained the same way we explain physics through the atomic theory. This way of explaining our behavior is bad faith; it is part of our patterns of flight – our attitude of excuses. We take refuge in determinism: It is our nature – it is our psychic constitution – it is our unconscious. Thereby I am disarming myself of every threatening character – giving it to another, which I am not but at the same time part of my body (in-itself). Sartre argue against

the unconscious id because he strongly believe in the unified, not determined me, but he also find the whole idea very implausible: Id is also wanting – hiding – fearing - resisting (for instance to be reveled in psychoanalysis). Id has in other words all the features of a ‘for-itself’, but is nevertheless placed in the region of the in-itself. That doesn’t make any sense. If Id also is a conscious being (not a thing), then it has to be an “I” – in other words me... and not a deterministic, alien force inside me. In other words; there is no ‘unconsciousness’ working inside me; “secret and deep ... from afar” (Sartre:75). There is no cleavage/fighting forces within me. “Bad faith is there in full consciousness, with all its contradictions.” (:75) Freud’s rejection of the conscious unity of the psyche “implies everywhere a magic unity linking distant phenomena across obstacles.” (:77) It becomes an internal dualism-problem similar to Descartes’ external soul-body-dichotomy.

Instead of id/ego, Sartre talks about “the censor” (:75): “It (the censor) alone can comprehend the question or the revelations of the psychoanalysts as approaching more or less near to the real drives which it strives to repress it alone because it alone *knows* what it is repressing.” We are at the heart one; a unity of being. “The censor must choose and in order to choose must be aware of so doing.” In other words; I am the *one* choosing what to express and what to suppress. Sartre uses frigid women<sup>22</sup> as an example: She has suppressed her sexuality, but it is “not complexes deeply sunk in half physiological darkness.” (:77) Psychological research of his time actually revealed that they are in fact giving objective signs of pleasure even though they deny it themselves. Everything is there – acted out by their body - in the daylight for everyone to see. The woman just refuses to see it herself – hiding it to herself. We might find explanations for this behavior in her past, and what comes first to my mind is sexual abuse or religious beliefs or something like that. She is turning away from what is happening to her in shame. *She* is the one fleeing the bodily situation, thought; being busy in her mind instead. It is *her* choice in this now. No alien psychic or other parts of her are making her flight happen. *She* chooses to go to bed with her husband. Rape would not be an act done in freedom. But the frigid woman *wants* to please her husband at some level (this is according to the research). She just doesn’t want to enjoy it herself. There can be many reasons why she chooses this behavior. But it is her choice.

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<sup>22</sup> According to Sartre this is a study of Stekel, 1937 – a Viennese psychiatrist.



Maybe the frigid woman believes her pleasure it is not allowed; “a pure and respectable woman does not feel this – does not do this, but duty as a wife demand of me that I...”, so she distract herself in her mind so as to not experience (as “I”) the pleasure which in fact is there (in her body). She distracts her consciousness in order to prove to herself that she is the frigidity she wants to be. This is bad faith “in full agreement with herself” – no hidden forces at play.

The flirting man (Sartre:78) is another example of bad faith. The woman agrees on a date, but refuses to look at it as “the first approach”. She convinces herself it is just a visit to a café with a friendly person. She keeps to the objective facts, even though she in her heart knows what he is up to. Not only that – she likes the thought of it! It is in fact because of the thrill of a “forbidden” flirt she wants to meet with him. Even his compliments she disarms of its sexual background – restricting the meaning to that of a harmless conversation with a respectful man. But at the same time “she is profoundly aware of the desire which she inspires, but the desire cruel and naked would humiliate and horrify her. Yet she would find no charm in a respect which would be only respect.” (:78) He takes her hand. Does this pull her out of bad faith? No. Human mind is very good at this game: “The woman leaves her hand there, but she *does not notice* that fact. She does not notice it because it happens by chance that she is at this moment all intellect.” (:79) She divorce from the body – is no longer there. The hand taking hers is suddenly an outer event *happening* to her. In this way she does not have to call it her choice – she does not have to take responsibility for the flirting. Sartre calls it “a perpetual game of escape”.

This a special feature of man; “a being which is what it is not and which is not what it is.” (:81) We can in fact create ourselves to be that which we are not. We are not what we are, because we are human beings and not of necessity being-in-itself. The woman is playing out the role of respectability, because the society demands it of her. She is creating herself this way. But at the same time she allows (in hidden ways) her passion to play out also. It is in bad faith if she is hiding this fact to herself, because she wants to keep her self-image of propriety. She is not this role; the propriety and the “I” are not identical. Respectability is like an object-being created by her, and she is playing the role – imagining it is she - being what she is not. We are never any one of our attitudes or actions, actually. We are *always* playing.

It is not just social demands – it is human being at its core. We are not anything in particular – that would be to be defined and definitely decided; that would be to be a determined being-in-itself.

“I can not say either that I *am* here or that I *am not* here, in the sense that we say “that box of matches *is* on the table; this would be to confuse my “being-in-the-world” with a “being-in-the-midst-of-the-world”. Nor that I *am* standing, nor that I *am* seated; this would be to confuse by body with the idiosyncratic totality of which it is only one of the structures. On all sides I escape being and yet – I am.” (Sartre:84)

“The goal of bad faith, as we said, is to put oneself out of reach; it is an escape.” (Sartre:89)

It is the self-destruction of the fact of consciousness; it is “an inner disintegration at the heart of being, and it is this disintegration which bad faith wishes to be” (:93); for instance being respectable and not passionate – playing roles we are not and pretending/believing we are them. Therefore he calls it bad *faith*; it is a *belief* – in me being a ‘in-itself’. What is the alternative – the true human being?

#### **(iv) Conscious being:**

I am that I am. I am not anything definite. Consciousness is “the instantaneous nucleus of this being”. (:94) It is *my* presence at the core of being – a pure being in the now. It is an *awareness of* being – a being I can *affect* my self with. But *I am not* this sadness – this passion – this pain – this roles or even this body. I am that I am in the now, and I am creating myself every instance:

“I must continue to make myself sad from beginning to end. I can not treat my sadness as an impulse finally achieved and put it on file without recreating it, nor can I carry it in the manner of an inert body which continues its movements after the initial shock. There is no inertia in consciousness.” (Sartre:84)

I *make* myself sad; it is not something which I am. I affect myself with it – I choose it, and I choose when to stop being this sadness, or this love, or this anger, or this worker. Something which makes me sad can make another laugh. It is my sadness but it is not me. It will pass. No one inflict it on me, but it is my being-in-the-world which inspires the sadness I feel; it becomes my experience because of my being-in-the-world. I can feed the emotion (thinking sad thoughts for instance, or seeking support from others) because I want to be sad – define

myself as a sad person over time. But that would be bad faith. I can at each moment choose to turn it around and start laughing about it or just letting it go.

Many (most?) people want predictability concerning both themselves and their lives. They want something definite to relate to and point to. It gives them a feeling of control. They want a framework and guidelines – they want a direction cut out and they want to know who they are. They want to be ‘defined’ and they want to be ‘managed’ – it is safe and easy. They want rules to follow; they want to be told. They are seeking themselves through others. Why? I think it is insecurity because they are not in touch with themselves at the heart of their being. So they listen to voices and wishes and beliefs of people outside themselves. Especially the voice of those who seem to have the inner wisdom or authority and power they lack themselves. It is dangerous – it can lead a society down a very destructive road – blindly listening to one or a few others instead of to one self. I think many existentialistic thinkers has seen this very clearly, and thereby been motivated to express their vision - wanting people to wake up and see the bad faith they are living in - inspire them to shake off the restrains put on by others; the often very tight and unnecessary reins of family, religion, culture or government.

But what is there to discover if our being is being what we are not and not being what we are? How can we find our selves if we can choose and change all the time without never really being any of it? It is exactly this we can discover; our freedom of choice!

“The decisive argument which is employed by common sense against freedom consists in reminding us of our powerlessness. Far from being able to modify our situation at our whim, we seem to be unable to change ourselves. I am not “free” either to escape the lot of my class, of my nation, of my family, or even to build up my own power of my fortune or to conquer my most insignificant appetites or habits. ... Much more than he appears “to make himself”, man seems “to be made” by climate and the earth, race and class, language, the history of the collectivity of which he is a part, heredity, the individual circumstances of his childhood, acquired habits, the great and small events of his life.” (Sartre:503)

Sartre describes here the bad faith of believing that the world is locked in around us; limiting and defining us. But can we really get out of this? On some level the powerlessness makes sense – all these limitations (social and natural) are there – are real. How can we claim our freedom in the midst of such a life? Freedom is the “I” according to Sartre; it is “being-for-itself” instead of “being-in-itself”. It is consciousness the way I choose to use the word. But

this is not easily explained. It is not a simple definition – it is not something we can grasp and place without maybe putting some effort into it. It is a paradox - the situated “I”. Sartre says;

“there is freedom only in *a situation*, and there is a situation only through freedom. Human-reality everywhere encounters resistance and obstacles which it has not created, but these resistances and obstacles have meaning only in and through the free choice which human-reality *is*.” (Sartre:511)

How can we explain such a claim? Let us follow Sartre into his notion “being-for-itself” and see where it goes: He paints a picture of a translucent, flowing, evanescent kind of being – as opposed to the opaque, solid, passive being-in-itself with its exigency. Being-for-itself is “a positional consciousness *of* the world”. (Sartre:7) It might sound strange to call this being, since it is not *something*, but in Sartre’s world of being we have to lay aside old conceptions about object and subject with extension and duration. We are talking here about ways of existing in the world – we are not describing different things and entities one can make “an inventory” of. The being-for-itself is a *relation* to the world. Nothing is contained *in* this consciousness (like knowledge, memories, faculties etc.). Being-for-itself is more like a point of presence, a perspective or point of view. Like with the example of the hammer and the body earlier, I see a table and it is not just a table-in-itself with the knowledge I have of its ‘facts’. It is also a table ‘for-me’:

“The world is human. We can see the very particular position of consciousness: being is everywhere, opposite me, around me; it weighs down on me, it besieges me, and I am perpetually referred from being to being; that table which is there is being and *nothing* more; that rock, that tree, that landscape – being and *nothing* else. I want to grasp this being and I no longer find anything but *myself*. This is because knowledge, intermediate between being and non-being, refers me to absolute being if I want to make knowledge subjective and refers me to myself when I think to grasp the absolute. ... Knowledge puts us in the presence of the absolute, and there is a truth of knowledge. But this truth, although releasing to us nothing more and nothing less than the absolute, remains strictly human.” (Sartre:241)

I stand before the table, and it can be experienced on several levels the way I see it: It is there in its extension and duration; it is 1,2m long and 0,5m high and made of wood and glass. It is brown and black and put together in a specific way. It is all of these facts in itself, and at the same time ‘this table’ for me. No one with their sight and mind in order would disagree with the facts, and we would probably agree on it being ‘a table’ if we have the same cultural-linguistic ‘horizon’. It is what it is with necessity, and with my sight I can get

knowledge of all of its parts and its instrumentality for me; it is something I can put my cup of tea and paper on. But my human being often goes even further, I will claim: I also make a judgment of it - I value it: Do I *like* it? I *approve* or *disapprove* of the placing of it and how it looks with that couch. This activity is not something contained in me – it is an activity *between* me and the table; it is provoked/activated by me standing being before the table. I don't know if we can meet the world totally free of these kinds of valuations, but I will claim that we usually are valuating – even if we don't always are aware of it. At least we usually have some sort of experience; a sensation or a feeling – never being *totally* passive/empty/dull in the world (as conscious 'for-itself' that is to say. Are we complete in our role as 'in-itself' – in bad faith - the story is different as we have seen). Sartre puts it this way: "There can be a free for-itself only as engaged in a resisting world." (Sartre:505) To feel, value, experience and act; that is how I understand the engagement Sartre is talking about. It is an involvement which would not be possible without the resistance of the solid, opaque world. There would not be anything to engage *in*; all would be translucent concepts of the consciousness.

But even more important: "The being who is said to be *free* is the one who can *realize* his projects." (:504) My engagement has to be conscious – as agency. I experience the resistance and I become aware of it being *me* having the experience. Maybe I see chocolate on the table; I become conscious of a want and I take one. The want is not contained in me – it arises because of the chocolate I see. The want is not contained in the chocolate either. It is an original connection of man to things, and my relation to the table and chocolate can be different than yours. If there was only being-in-itself (realism), I would not have a personal experience, realizing/being conscious of *my* enjoyment and *my* choice. If the world was only of my consciousness (idealism), I would not experience the chocolate as something solid/with resistance. It would just be a concept – an idea – a fantasy...

Our body is a thing – the closest most durable thing the human being relates to, I would think... We identify strongly with the body, but, as we have seen earlier – the body as such (as *that*) and the body for me (as *me*) is two different ways of being. The body in-itself explain the functions of the eyes, but it does not explain the seeing – my *seeing*, and how I value what I see and what I choose to focus on amongst everything which every minute

reaches my eyes. It doesn't explain what I choose to remember and learn, and what I choose to forget or miss. The body tells us about the hand; what it is made of and how it works – interacting with the brain. But this does not explain the being of man – the “for-itself”. It does not tell the whole story about how I experience a touch – why something I like can be a terrible experience for others. Sartre calls it two essentially different orders of reality. And it is through our being-in-the-world we can get in touch with the “I” – the conscious being of me. It is here in the midst of the world; in the seeing, the touching, the tasting, the running and climbing and falling. Our body is “our original relation to the world – that is, our very upsurge into the midst of being.” (Sartre:349) It is no first me → then the body (or the other way around). Our being-in-the-body-in-the-world is the ‘situation’ which at once reveals to us the “I” and the world. The body is neither a screen between me and the world, nor the “I” as such. It is the center of reference where “I loose myself to the world, in order for the world to exist and for me to be able to transcend it.” (:342) I am my body and I am not my body: The eyes are my reading, and I exists the pain in my body. The body is the center of my experience. Passion is an experience of the body and my experience because I am conscious of me being passionate (that is; if I am not in bad faith as the frigid woman choosing flight from the experience).

So; how much sense have we made of the “I” so far? I am situated – in the body in the world. But I am very different from this world I am situated in, because I am not necessarily determined by it. I can choose to be determined – pretend to be an in-itself, but I can also choose *not* to be. I can be for-myself; a freedom of consciousness; a reveling intuition *of* something instead of being a defined/determined/limited ‘something’. Sartre has a brilliant way of explaining (make sense of) this *rise of man* in the midst of the world – this special unique feature of human being (for-itself). He makes an original “move”, using the act of negation to explain the workings of the free human agency – the being-for-itself in a determined, solid mass of positive being-in-itself. The act of questioning is an example of this; this “human attitude filled with meaning” (:28).

I find the question a very appropriate example indeed, since it is a special human feature to involve themselves with questions about life and death, meaning and mysteries, past and future, the fabric of the world and the possibility of other worlds etc. This is not a possible

attitude of the being-in-itself in its opaqueness and fullness - locked in/around itself. It cannot question anything – it just is what it is in a world which is what it is and which determined what will happen through natural laws. I, on the other hand, can ask a question. Thereby I open for new possibilities. No longer just being what I am letting it define my acts and my future. With questions like “why do I go to work – what is the point – do I really want to – what do I really want?” for instance, I rise out of my determination and open up for the possibility to become something else – do something else. For Sartre, the possibility of the human to raise questions and get a negative reply: “I don’t want to work anymore!” is evidence of something he calls “non-being”. (Sartre:31) One day the worker asks himself if he really want to do this anymore. Nothingness has slipped into the heart of being, and it is the worker as being-for-itself who made it possible. In the full positivity of being-in-itself there was no lack. Nothing was missing. No questions asked. Then the nothingness appeared, and it is real being. It is not a concept or a metaphor for Sartre.

“Realities like absence, change, otherness, repulsion, regret, distraction, *etc.*...there are an infinite number of realities which are not only objects of judgments but which are experienced, opposed, feared, *etc.*, by the human being and which in their inner structure are inhabited by negation, as by a necessary condition of their existence. We shall call them *négatités*”. (Sartre:45)

Nothingness is not a geometrical place the way Heidegger describes it. It is not “beyond the world” – something “extramundane”. (Sartre:31) Hegel’s “dialectical concept of nothingness” as “empty abstractions” is also rejected (:36-40); it is more than judgments of our mind. Nothingness “haunts” being “at the heart of being” (:46) without being part of being. That is not possible, because being-in-itself is full positivity without a trace of negativity by which it can surpass itself towards non-being. So then, how does nothingness comes into being? “It follows therefore that there must exist a Being of which the property is to nihilate Nothingness<sup>23</sup> ... a being by which nothingness comes to things”. (:46) This Being is the being-for-itself, and by this Sartre has given an argument for the existence of being-for-itself. It is the laws of things that they have to have the seed in them for that which

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<sup>23</sup> “Nihilate”: “A word coined by Sartre. Consciousness exists as consciousness by making a nothingness (*q.v.*) arise between it and the object of which it is conscious. Thus nihilation is that by which consciousness exists. To nihilate is to encase with a shell of non-being.” (Sartre:653)

comes from them. A frog cannot come from a flower. Water cannot come from a solid, dry rock. Being-in-itself can not be the cause of nothingness – it is full positivity. But nevertheless non-being exists as a matter of fact (in the human being-in-the-world). The act of questioning is beyond doubt a fact of the world, and thereby the being-for-itself creating it must also be a fact of the world.

The example of experiencing destruction might make the picture even clearer. This is a *négativité* coming to the world through man; “it is a conduct in the face of nothingness”. In other words it has the same structure as the question – through “destruction” we view non-being as a possibility. For example in a storm, if a city is destroyed, the being-in-itself only ends up as something else – it is only “modified distribution of masses of beings”. (Sartre:32) There is no less of anything after the storm... It is only through the being-for-itself the result can be experienced as destruction, death and loss of houses etc. This is because of the relation of man to being. The in-itself loses its instrumentality. An uncertainty or fragility, a probability of non-being, comes into being through man (I can lose my house!) The being under consideration is *that* (for instance a house) and outside of that *nothing* (scattered planks). But the destruction is nevertheless an objective fact (the house *did* end up as heap of planks after the storm). Man impressing fragility upon the being is just as real from a human point of view as the storm and destruction.

Negation is that which makes it possible for us (as conscious human beings) to “tear us away from this wall of positivity which encircles us”: It is “an abrupt break in continuity...” – an original and irreducible event” – “an abrupt intuitive discovery...of the *not*”. (:35) It indicates an essential relation of human reality to the world – through an act, an expectation, a project or another human engagement in the world: We have the potential in us to not be completely “obscured” by the being-in-itself; blinded and determined; instinctive/automatically driven. Sartre calls it “the raise of man in the midst of the being which “invests” him”. (:48) But we are still a part of the fabric of the world – there is no mystery to it; man “can not even provisionally annihilate the mass of being which is standing before itself” (:48).



“Human reality can only modify its *relation* with being. For man to put a particular existent out of circuit is to put himself out of circuit in relation to that existent. In this case he is not subject to it; he is out of reach; it can not act on him, for he has retired *beyond a nothingness*.” (Sartre:48)

Man can change his attitude towards something, detach himself from something, see new possibilities or solutions or in other ways change his relation to being-in-itself – without having to change the causal chain of the event or cause anything to vanish in mysterious ways or some other form of annihilation. I find this a brilliant explanation of man-in-the-world, because this way Sartre avoids making the theory plausible by having to 1) make man a necessary/totally determined part of the being-in-itself or 2) making him someone with mysterious abilities/powers to act upon the causality of the world with his consciousness alone.

Here are some examples of mine to clarify this point: Human being can break with the determined, lawful, programmed nature by choosing for instance suicide, or by making artificial wings so that we can fly like a bird. This is how man through its creativity has transcended the being-in-itself. And the origin of these actions could be the question: “Do I have to stay alive?” or “Why can’t I fly like a bird?” The tree never questions its being, but we do. We look at the world and see lack – in us and around us – all the time. Cities and civilizations have been created this way. But we cannot create these changes by conscious acts alone: We are part of the being-in-itself and have to play by its rules: We cannot just choose to die; we have to engage ourselves – do the act - kill our bodies. We cannot just choose to grow wings; we have to make them artificial. The longing for flying is a negation or absence experienced by man, and it opens up new possibilities. And even though the longing is a real event *for* him (like the pleasure mentioned earlier), it doesn’t have an external cause *in* the world (the being-in-itself); “motivation is not causation”(Sartre:50). The longing has its origin in the engagement of man in the world.

### **(v) Waking up to our freedom:**

We have come a long way in understanding “man-in-the-world” now. We start our lives submerged in the in-itself, but at some point – hopefully, we start waking up to our full potential as human beings. Maybe it is a happening – a crisis – a person – a book; something

that is making what “is” (life) questionable or unbearable. Many have experienced this; a sudden rise above the fixed and limited; an awakening – a new perspective – something which changed ones view on ones possibilities. We find ourselves making *new* choices beyond what we believed to be possible – no longer being submerged in bad faith.

There are indeed more to our being than reach the eye. I will give you a real-life example: A woman has carried with her throughout life a memory of physical and psychological abuse from when she was a child. She has carried the pain with her for 33 years now, and to make life bearable she has been easing the pain with drugs for most of her adult life. But the destructive drug-abuse just contributed to the burden; now she also had to carry with her the physical pain of addiction and the shame and guilt related to this kind of lifestyle. And she was being judged, despised, rejected and punished by other human beings and by society, because she had an ‘illegal’ behavior. She became a ‘bad person’ – also in her own eyes. Some might even look upon her as some kind of ‘beast’! The “all time low” for her was when she had managed to get some money (probably through another shameful act) to celebrate her daughters eighth birthday. But holding the money in her hand, the craving for drugs was triggered and she just couldn’t help herself<sup>24</sup> – she never came home with the cake and a present to her daughter. She got high on crack instead. Her father might have felt the same way when he abused his daughter some 30 years ago; “I just couldn’t help it” - because of his own history – his own wounds – the pain or anger which determined him. He “had to” ease/release himself - one way or another...

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<sup>24</sup> According to a TV-program, scientists can view how the brain reacts to “triggers” (pictures, smells, music, people, places etc.) that creates the crave/want, and thereby explain why this *override the will* - why addicts “just don’t stop doing drugs”: It is not in their power, they say - the triggers are controlling them. **But**, at the same time we know that people quit all the time, and even though they may feel the triggering in their body they take control and don’t act upon it. It is *a matter of choice*... (often made after a especially bad experience...). We probably have a whole lot of different “triggers” which provokes all kinds of feelings (rage, fear etc.), and we act upon them in different ways – or choose to become self-conscious enough not to act upon them at all. Kant: “*Man is an animal that . . . has need of a master. For he certainly abuses his freedom in relation to his equals, and although as a rational creature he desires a law that establishes boundaries for everyone's freedom, his selfish animal propensities induce him to except himself from them wherever he can. He thus requires a master who will break his self-will and force him to obey a universally valid will, whereby everyone can be free. Where is he to find this master? . . . The supreme guarantor should be just in himself and still be a man.*” (Kant:33-34)

The story could end here; one of millions of stories about social inheritance – abuse and lack and pain and crime – wounds brought down generation after generation. But in this case it stopped with this woman. The all time low made the mother make a choice; “NO MORE!” And she changed her way of life – it shifted there and then. Probably not ‘just like that’/in an instant, but the choice she made was total change of mind in the now – like a revelation or an “aha!” From that day on she changed the direction of her life completely – and over some time and with some help she managed to make a good life for herself and her daughter– a life which included happiness and hope and fulfillment. She let go of the past and made peace with her self, and the possibilities of the future was suddenly wide open. The physical triggers could no more determine her acts. She was free! And she is telling her story so that others can see that we are never determined by our past or our physical constitution or our circumstances – no matter what. We can always and at any time make that choice - change our life. She is the living proof of this fact – one of many. A change of heart it possible; in this case a shift from victimhood to freedom and self-mastery.

It doesn’t have to be so dramatic: We can be pretty comfortable in our lives – maybe a bit bored, but no great crisis. Then something or someone shows up at your door - inspiring you to expand – open up to new possibilities – a new freedom; hitting a nerve in your – awakening a knowingness – opening a hidden door. When I look at all the people letting themselves be determined – being ‘followers’ (or just remember the time I was one myself – for instance the determined worker acting more like a robot than like a conscious and creative human being), I think: They has a lot to discover! Most of all they have their freedom to discover. The worker believes he has to go to work everyday – it has become his nature. But nothing is forcing him other than his belief in this – that he is only a being-in-itself. The ignorance is his choice, because the ability is in him - the possibilities of rising beyond that which is. He is a human being with the knowingness within – he can reach for it whenever he wants. Why doesn’t he? Maybe because then he would have to take a good look at himself and feel what he really wants, and what if that is to stay home?! He would have to choose; himself or duty – his wishes and dreams, or that which is expected of him. The anxiety probably would set in, because it would be an impossible choice: On the one side impossible to continue in the same, restrained, repetitive track now that freedom has

become a possibility. On the other side it would be impossible to *not* continue – fearing the consequences (socially, financially etc – advanced survival instincts one could say). It can be seen as an inner fight on a higher level: Not the animal against the moral, but the animal/moral against freedom – or body/mind against consciousness (the way I choose to use the terms).

Sartre wants to penetrate further into the human freedom. It is not enough to see man's *relation* to the world. He also wants to investigate what it is *in* man that makes him free. What is this nihilating act? As we remember, the realization of not having to go to work required a negative moment in the worker. It is as an act of imagination, but it is nevertheless a reality – a real event. It is a break with (positive) being – a nihilating process which “derives its source only from itself”. What is this “I” which can bring nothingness into the world? Sartre makes it clear that it can *not* be any kind of defined entity-self with duration:

“And in so far as I continually uses *négativités* to isolate and determine existents – *i.e.*, to think them – the succession of my “state of consciousness” is a perpetual separation of effect from cause, since every nihilating process must derive its source only from itself. Inasmuch as my present state would be a prolongation of my prior state, every opening by which negation could slip through would be completely blocked. Every psychic process of nihilation implies then a cleavage between the immediate psychic past and the present. This cleavage is precisely nothingness.” (Sartre:51)

If we have followed Sartre on his explanation of how consciousness can raise above/free itself from the determined being-in-itself, then it is difficult not to agree on this too. He is really just explaining the same process “from the inside”. Consciousness cannot be a determined, permanent, solid thing (analog to the physical world). Then we would really not have come any further in our explanation of human freedom. We would be stuck as in previous attempts of bridging the gap between the two ways of being. Just as consciousness can break with the positive fullness of the physical world, it must be able to break with its past and ends. The point is that human consciousness is not part of *any* causal chain; the past is not “pushing” and the future not “pulling”. (And, as mentioned before; there is no content *in* the consciousness.) Here and now we are free to choose, despite what has happened and what ends we have; nothing really determines us. We can choose to reproduce the past once again or break with it, and we can choose new ends in the future or

follow what we earlier decided, and we can do this *at any point of time*. There is in other words 'nothingness' between the last now - and this now – and the next now. We do not forget anything or stop making plans; we still will have our history with us. What we talk about here is the fact that we can rise above it – it is not our being anymore with any necessity; it is our choice to continue the past or break with it. Just like the mother being a junkie did in previous example.

Or to take another more common example: I am in the forest. It is there *in-itself* in its opaque fullness, with trees and stones and moss and flowers and birds and sounds and smells and bushes... But *for-me* in addition the forest is peace and beauty and harmony and wellbeing. My parents inspired me to love it there; nature was an important part of my upbringing. But a friend of mine was growing up on a farm; nature is very practical for her. It is associated with food and income. One friend of mine was never in nature as a child. For him the forest is associated with bad smells and dirt, sweat and hardship, bugs and snakes and spiders.... I don't know any who are absolute neutral to nature – even though their engagement might be from a distance - idealistic; "save the forests and the whales" etc. Without any meaning or engagement, Sartre would probably say that such a human being is in a state of "in-itself" and not a conscious human "being-for-itself". What has motivated the meaning the forest for each and one of us? Probably our upbringing and social setting and past experiences. Sartre's point is that, even though this is true, there will always be in fact a gap between the past and the now – and if we choose to be conscious of the potential of the negation of our history and circumstances, we can experience the forest in new ways.

We are never determined by our past, beliefs or attitudes. Or, as Sartre puts it: "If we consider the prior consciousness envisaged as motivation, we see suddenly and evidently that *nothing* has just slipped in between that state and the present state." (:51-52) And this is happening 1) with "no break in continuity within the flux of the temporal development". 2) "Neither has there been an abrupt interpolation of an opaque element to separate prior from subsequent in the way that a knife blade cuts a piece of fruit in two." 3) "Nor is there a *weakening* of the motivating force of the prior consciousness; it remains what it is..." "The prior consciousness is always *there* (though with the modification of "pastness"). It constantly maintains a relation of interpenetration with the present consciousness, but on

the basis of this existential relation it is put out of the game, out of the circuit, between parentheses...” (Sartre:52)

The one hating the forest can through positive experiences of it open his eyes for the beauty of it – and maybe even appreciate the eatable stuff we can find there. That doesn't mean that he suddenly is a different self, or that he forgets all about his past attitudes and that which has been his motivating forces from his upbringing. The change of heart is not like a gap in time or space. Maybe the junkie will divide her life into before and after the “aha!” But nothing is really gone - the gap is not real – it is just a way of explaining the change. On all other area she stays the same; she is the same mother with maybe even greater motivation. The junkie-part will always stay there as a potential; its motivating forces can come back. Everything can be chosen again.

“It is necessary then that conscious being constitute itself in relation to its past as separated from this past by a nothingness. It must necessarily be conscious of this cleavage in being, but not as a phenomenon which it experience, rather as a structure of consciousness which it is. Freedom is the human being putting his past out of play by secreting his own nothingness.” (Sartre:52)

Our inner realization of freedom is expressed as anguish, which is very different than fear: The precipice “announces itself through fear” ... “as *to be avoided*; it represents a danger of death.” (:54) It is something I must react to “as a destructible transcendent in the midst of transcendent”. Being a passive being-in-itself in relation to the possibility is to be an object in the world, subject to gravitation - cause and effect - strictly determined. Everything is simply “about-to-happen”. Anguish is different from fear according to Sartre; it announces our freedom. It is “the recognition of a possibility as *my* possibility”. In freedom “a nihilating nothing removes from me all excuse. (:59) It can be terrifying; suddenly I realize that I'm in charge – it is up to me – my choice all together; not my body or psyche or beliefs or past or anything other than my self. Suddenly I realize “these motives as not sufficiently effective”; I can not rely on my instincts! This is often how people describes their fear of heights; they don't “trust their instinct” (to save their life). They are not afraid of falling ‘happening’ – they are actually afraid that they will throw themselves into the abyss (*against* their instincts). Past experiences, instincts or future ends (“I want to live” or “I want to die”) – not one of them determines my choices here and now: “From the sole fact that they are motives of a

possibility (not of necessity; my comment), present themselves as ineffective, as non-determinant; they can no more *produce* the suicide than my horror of the fall can *determine* me to avoid it." (Sartre:56) This is "anguish in the face of the future":

The gambler who wants to quit his addiction is experiencing "anguish in the face of the past". His past resolution does not determine him – it is totally ineffective in the now – he is not subject to it. "What the gambler apprehends at this instant is again the permanent rupture in determinism; it is nothingness which separates him from himself." He cannot be sure that he will hold his promise to himself... He must remake it freely again and again – standing *each moment* in the face of a choice; gamble or not. Nothing compels him one way or another. "What we should note at present is that freedom, which manifests itself through anguish, is characterized by a constantly renewed obligation to remake the *Self* which designates the free being." (:58)

But, as I have said before; in "bad faith" we have our patterns of flight from anguish and freedom – we are "always ready to take refuge in a belief in determinism". (:67) The excuses can be a psychological determinism (which "provides us with a nature productive of our acts" (:64)), or a reflected determinism (hide from myself the fact that every possibility is my possibility (:65)), or I go even further and "assert that I *am* my essence in the mode of being of the in-itself." (:66) The nothingness of freedom and anguish haunts me, and that can indeed explain why we choose the comfort of bad faith...

## IV: MIND VERSUS CONSCIOUSNESS

I still haven't exhausted all possibilities when it comes to investigating: "*What lies at the heart of human being?*" Based on Sartre's thoughts presented here, I can sum up the answers we have reached so far in this way; behind the rationalized powerlessness in bad faith is the ability of man to bring nothingness and thereby freedom into the world. Sartre is describing this unique human quality/ability in a very intuitive and common sense way, but there are still some loose ends I want to wind up. I will do this by discussing further how we can view the mind of human being, since this is where we usually "place" consciousness. If

the mind is not it – what is this point of presence - this immediacy of the being-for-itself? And how does it differ from the rationalization and temporality of the human mind? This strategy will hopefully bring us even more clarity.

### **(i) The mind; cogito and knowledge**

The commonsensical view (also amongst many scientists now) is that mental and psychological facts must be explainable without necessarily reducing it to physical facts. Instead their mutual influence on each other becomes more and more clear<sup>25</sup>. The one does not supervene on the other. But none of these areas of being can explain our experience of “me” as free first causes in the world (making our wishes and intentions come true and making our creative expressions manifest, for instance). Both bodily and mental functions are part of the determined being-in-itself. Here Sartre and I agree with science. The mind is used to receive information, handle it and store it; it sends signals throughout the body and make sure everything is working in a balanced, optimal way. It is the mainframe of our bodily functions, one could say; it is an absolutely necessary part for this body to get by in this physical world.

We are thinking creatures, and we need the ability to gain knowledge to get by in this world, no doubt about that. But it is important to separate being from knowledge. This is Sartre’s point of departure from the Cartesian “cogito ergo sum” (I think, I am). Being is about engagement - not about knowledge, and being comes first. Which sounds like a plausible statement to me: After all we do come into this world before we learn about it.... Sartre argues for the primacy of being this way:

“It is we ourselves who decide these dimensions (for instance speed; my comment) by our very upsurge into the world and it is very necessary that we decide them, for otherwise they *would not be* at all. Thus they are relative not to the knowledge which we get of them but to our primary engagement at the heart of the world. (Sartre:331-332)

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<sup>25</sup> Our mind-set influences the bodily health – for instant fear and stress over time can manifest as gastric ulcer or muscle pain. And likewise; the body influences our state of mind/our psyche; physical pain or bodily abuse can end in a sort of “victim-personality” for instance - which can have an effect on our life as such. But also our hormone-system influences our mind-set; testosterone=“aggression” (or passivity/no passion if lack), and endorphin/dopamine=“well being” (or pain/depression if lack).



Speed is relative; seen in a microscope something can appear much faster than with the eye. Or to use other examples; a turtle is fast compared to the growing of a plant, but slow compared to the rabbit. But the rabbit is often too slow to avoid the eagle. The eagle is really fast when it attacks, but compared to a jet plane... There is no absolute truth to this. It is relative to our focus and background (comparison) and to the eye (or instrument) which observes. We can measure the speed, but who decided that a specific kind of movement should be for instance 100 km/h? We have chosen this. Who decided the definition of 'one meter' (and thereby one km as  $10^3$  m)? Man did. We have *agreed* on all these measurements - including clock and date. And when we disagree we agree on the differences (currency, for instance, and the use of pound, miles and F. versus liter, km and Celsius). It is man's engagement in the world which has created these facts – this knowledge.

The idea of the primacy of knowledge has been one of the big faults in the past according to Sartre. Consciousness cannot be known through reflection. I can get knowledge of my body, but I getting knowledge of *me* would be to make me a thing – to split me in two; me observing myself. Or it would be a circle; I am at the same time the knower and the known. "Not all consciousness is knowledge, but all knowing consciousness can be knowledge only of its object." (Sartre:7) And there is not anything to know *in* the consciousness the way Sartre describes this being-for-itself; it is a translucent being with a positional consciousness of the world - "the knowing being in so far as he *is*, not in so far as he is known". (:7) Being comes first, and this pre-reflective cogito is the pre-cognitive basis for the Cartesian cogito.

Consciousness is always consciousness of *something*, as I have made clear previous. Man cannot be known separate from the world he is engaged in. Our self-awareness rises in the midst of the world. But not firstly as knowledge of it, though; our revelation of *being as such* is the primary; a spontaneously and immediate - pre-reflective and implicit consciousness of being consciousness of an object. I can have a pain-consciousness of me being stung by a bee - or a fear-consciousness when I hear the "bzzzzz"- or a desire-consciousness because I smell cake. I am aware of this – not as an inner contemplation but as an experience of the world in the midst of the world. The awareness doesn't come from knowledge – it is an immediate experience *before* the mind seeks explanations (to learn to avoid or repeat the experience). But I am not just a "mindless", reactive thing; *I feel – I sense – I experience*, and I

am conscious of me feeling and of the world making this feeling possible in me. And then I might reflect and conclude about it.

Sartre explains the process this way: “In the upsurge of the for-itself as presence to being, there is an original dispersion: the for-itself is lost outside, next to the in-itself, and in the three temporal ecstasies<sup>26</sup>. It is outside of itself, and in its inmost heart this being-for-itself is ecstatic since it must look for its being elsewhere.” (Sartre:176) When the bee sting, I am my body – that is my existence in that moment. But I am not this in-itself: “The upsurge of the for-itself confirms the failure of the in-itself, which has not been able to be its own foundation.” We are self-aware beings – not things, and this “remains for the for-itself a permanent possibility”. By reflection the for-itself attempts to recover its own being: I am not pain, I am the one experiencing a bodily pain, I am... But the “I” is nothingness – it is undefined, unreachable, untouchable – nothing *given*. It is the experience of me in pain. We want to be for ourselves what we are, though (bad faith) – that is how the mind works. Sartre puts it this way:

“The goal in short is to overtake that being which flees itself while being what it is in the mode of not-being and which flows on while being its own flow, which escapes between its own fingers; the goal is to make of it a *given*, a given which finally *is what it is*.” (Sartre:176)

The motivation consists in objectifying and interiorizing the “I” (the way Freud did for instance). But it has to fail; it is to make of me an in-itself which I am not. I am actually the “not”; the negation of such a theory. I am that I am. I cannot be described at a distance as something we can have knowledge of. “To *know* is to make oneself *other*.” (:178) This is what Sartre calls “impure reflection”. “Pure reflection”, on the other hand, is the immediacy of our conscious awareness. It is that which comes before the mind goes to work:

“But the reflection which delivers the reflected-on to us, not as a given but as the being which we have to be, in indistinction without a point of view, is a knowledge overflowing itself and without explanation. At the same time it is never surprised by itself; it does not *teach* us anything but only *posits*. In the knowledge of a transcendent object indeed there is a *revelation* of the object, and the object revealed can deceive or surprise us. But in the reflective revelation there is a positing of a being whose being was already a revelation. Reflection is limited to making this revelation exist for itself; the revealed being is not revealed as a given but

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<sup>26</sup> Past, present and future

with the character of the “already revealed”. Reflection is recognition rather than knowledge. It implies as the original motivation of the recovery a pre-reflective comprehension of what it wishes to recover.” (Sartre:178)

Here Sartre describes the pure reflection on a being-level (not knowledge-level). Nothing given – no defining or explaining involved – no teaching or learning, at this point. The pre-reflective is delivering itself as being; it posits its being. It is a revelation/recognition of pure existence. Kant explained our being in the world as an inner organizing of things in time and space and natural laws. Sartre goes beyond this – claiming we experience being before gaining this kind of knowledge – judging it as better/worse – over/under – before/after – cause/effect. Our consciousness is not this knowledge.

But why do I do this “exercise” at all – trying to figuring out this peculiar pre-reflective being of man? Isn’t the important thing to gain knowledge anyway? I can answer this objection the fast way; we do it to get to the heart of human being. If there is existence behind knowledge we have to search for this to get to our core being – to the freedom of being. But there is even more to this search. What I want to figure out and share is what effects on our lives the focus on knowledge has. I ask myself: Is knowledge overrated – do the workings of the mind have too much power over us and our lives – depriving us of our freedom? And; is there really an alternative? Sartre says yes. But let us first look at the some other features of the mind, and their effect on our lives.

## **(ii) The mind; psyche and belief-systems**

**Psychological duration** is according to Sartre “the concrete fabric of the psychic unities of the flow”. (Sartre:181) We experience this as fact, so Sartre will not call it an illusion, but... “Yet it is not conceivable that the unreflective for-itself, which historicizes itself in its upsurge, should *be itself* these qualities, these states, and these (psychic) acts.” (:181) If we have followed Sartre in his thoughts so far, we can agree on this too. In our immediate state of nothingness in the now we are not anything specific and describable:

“In fact if we apprehend the for-itself in its historicity, psychic duration vanishes and states, qualities, and acts disappear to give place to being-for-itself as such, which is only as the unique individuality from which the process of historization cannot be separated. It is this which flows, which calls to itself from the ground of the future, and which is heavy with the past which it was; it is this which historicizes its selfness, and we know that it is – in the primary or unreflective mode – a consciousness of the world and not of self.” (Sartre:182)

This is an important point; the “I” do not define itself – it is the experience of the world every minute; now the pain of a bee-sting – next minute the pleasure of a cake. “It is impure reflection which constitutes the succession of psychic facts or *psyche*”, Sartre claims. This is not what is at the heart of human being. This is what we deduce and make of our experiences after they have been experienced and the mind starts analyzing and systemizing and explaining and seeking cause and effect and valuating and judging and making things very scientific. The psychic form is something ready-made according to Freud and his followers - explained as Ego and Id. It has its own, universally described states, qualities, acts, parts. “We use the term *Psyche* for the organized totality of these virtual and transcendent existents which form a permanent cortege for impure reflection and which are the natural object of *psychological* research.” (Sartre:186)

If we believe in this, we become defined beings in-itself – determined by the psyche: “Due to the fact that the psychic object is in-itself, its present can not be flight, nor can its future be pure possibility.” (:188) We are indeed grand creators; we have actually created something we in bad faith can have as our identity and excuse - as an outer explanation and cause of the personality and behavior of the “I”. But we easily become victims of it too, if we become convinced that there is “no way out” of the defined – for instance of a psychic patterns or of personality traits which makes our life miserable and shameful. We usually both gain and loose in our flight from and creation of ourselves in bad faith.

**Belief systems:** Traditionally, theory-building is based upon some fundamental beliefs which are conceived of as “the truth”, and from this fundament more “truths” can be logically deduced. Empirical knowledge can be induced by observing the same again and again and never otherwise; verifications like this makes the “truth” of the fact more solid. This is basic philosophy of science, but my point here is that we are doing some kind of belief-system-building here; brick by brick until we have a complete system of beliefs; a gathering of “knowledge” logically deduced or scientifically/methodically reached. The problem is that this knowledge always can be questioned. At some level we know this; that our thought-building might not be as solid as we wish for – no matter how hard we have worked on it. Sometimes whole societies have refined the belief-systems for generations, and they become very protective of their vulnerable beliefs. It doesn’t matter how many bricks

(intuitions/beliefs/revelations and stories/myths and experiences/facts and analytical/mathematical truths etc.) they have uses and how well they are built together (logically, mathematically, scientifically or in any other way the mind finds plausible). If the fundament goes – it all falls apart anyway. This can be the reason for the religious and idealistic aggression, for instance (catholic inquisition; communist KGB; Muslim terrorism etc.) as well as science's rejection of perceived/experienced phenomenon's which weaken their theories or methods. (In medicine, for instance, it is well known that many are fighting alternative solutions in stead of being curious, and in addition they disregard negative effects of their own methods and drugs)<sup>27</sup>. There is something very rigid, absolute and short-sighted in such belief-systems; new information just glances off – is rejected; everyone who is part of the "system" is clinging to their beliefs "no matter what". The system can sometimes be quite empty too – especially if it is of the idealistic sort (like communism and Nazism). It can be based on lies and illusions - propaganda and manipulation; stories about outer/inner enemies and potential utopias/paradises etc. It can be very logical coherent argued for, but nevertheless based upon totally untrue fundamentals.<sup>28</sup>

W.V. Quine is a philosopher in the naturalistic tradition who objected to the conceptual analysis and the traditional dogmas: We have to go to experience for answers. We cannot think our way to anything fundamental or base knowledge on singular, analytical, mythical or abstract pre-empirical "truths". Our belief-systems don't have to be a rigid, thought-through system-building. It can instead be the result of a reciprocal communication between us and the world; very flexible – always correctible without a total breakdown. No absolute truths are necessary; no fundament is needed. The belief-system is a whole – a holistic, coherent 'body': "Total science is like a field of force whose boundary conditions are experience." (Quine: 20-46) Everything is connected, and in the "flux of experience" the system is tested. When new facts appear everything else just adapts so that the inner, logical

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<sup>27</sup> Karl Popper made this point; a criticism of rationalistic methods. Science should not be about verifying ones beliefs to find (or hold on to) absolute truths. (It is easy then, to turn ones back to important information; see only that which one *want* to see...). Science is about trying to falsify ones hypothesis, to see if they hold.

<sup>28</sup> Hannah Arendt criticized the totalitarian ideologies as trivial and superficial without any roots or depths. Easily swept away again like a sand-castle in a storm....

coherence is maintained; it adapts to stay consistent – inside and with experience. There is no need to put blinders on – no need to reject anything.

This is actually a process quite natural for our mind, and there is no need to bother about every bit and piece of the system – it doesn't give any meaning to discuss every single brick. Nothing is linked to anything particular anyway; inside the field one can be very pragmatic in the adaption to reality – usually in a way which disrupts the logical structure as a whole very little. I find this way of seeing the mind beautifully simple and natural, and it seems very effortless compared to the constant protection and refinement and detail-focus of the fundamentalist-way of doing it (like a hopeless puzzle). A lot of our mental capacity can be released to other tasks.

We can choose how to do it/how to use our mind, because our belief-systems (scientific; religious; common sense etc.) are all just tools anyway; instruments to find meaning and significance in the world/in ones lives; tools to simplify and structure – to make it possible to master existence. The beliefs are helpful myths – not truths. No assumptions or assertions – no statements are immune to revision. A total flexibility is possible without ending in chaos (which might be the fear of those fighting for a belief they deep down know is not true). There is really no need to defend the thought-building at any cost; become a prisoner of it; getting enemies because of it; living in fear; being controlled and limited; go to war over it and sacrificing ones life for it. There is really nothing to fear - it is okay to change...

**To sum up:** The mind can be viewed as that which “takes in” what's out there and project it very automatically out again. It is the brain-functions which keeps the body alive, and which senses and perceives, gathering knowledge and keeps memories and finds effective, automatic patterns of behavior. It analyzes and rationalizes; organizes and defines and categorizes; concludes and make huge, logical belief-systems of it all. It is a temporal and causal presence in the world; we learn from the past and bring it with us towards a future. We believe for instance that the future is set up for us/fixed - based on what/where we have been and are now. We make rules and regulations for ourselves - automatically internalized based upon our upbringing/our past/what we “are told”. It is a kind of “programming” which we project onto ourselves, others, the society and the world. The mind colors how we

perceive everything if we let it. Or said in another way; our mind/psyche is how we have “set” ourselves to “work/function” in the world - based upon what we have taken in and/or rationalized. Therefore I claim that the mind is not necessarily as wise as we like to think of it. If we let it be the ruler of our lives, “I” becomes just a passenger going along for the ride...

**Examples and reflections:**

**a)** The predictability of the mind (because it is so automatic) is the reason why scams are possible, for instance. These artists and traitors know just how to manipulate and fool—seduce and mislead people; knowing how their minds work – what “buttons” to push and what diversions to make. They know the workings of the mind, and less conscious people go right into the trap. The scam-artist can play them with ease. More conscious people, though, “smell the fuse” (to use a Norwegian expression). It is also why advertising work; it is manipulation too, and masses are being easily influenced. It is an important part of society-building, actually. The idea of “us and them” is a human thought-construct; a belief-system. It is a mean to hold groups together; it is a manipulative grip. The genetic variation is also just a story to justify someone ruling over/abuse and misuse and kill other human beings. The differences are actually too little amongst our “species” to explain the idea of “races” etc. Look at dogs; they don’t worry about this... Prejudice is a power-tool to create fear (“we must stay together!”), and it works well because of how our minds work. Just like seduction. If you first have learned the game it is easy to “play” others; they become like playing puppets-in-a-string.

**b)** But the “scam” can be internal too; we fool ourselves. A hypochondriac is a good example of this fascinating use of the abilities of the mind; we can by choice actually make ourselves feel sick! Belief is a strong tool indeed. But this is not a conscious choice; then it would not have work. It is like bad faith in general; if we knew we were lying to ourselves we would not be convinced by it. There has to be a cover-up of our participation. It has to be experienced as real – not of our making. It is truly brilliant. It can be motivated by many things. I’m not a psychiatrist, but it is easy to see how the believed sickness and pain can make the person achieve desired attention or care, or he/she have an legitimate excuse not to work (an attitude that can otherwise be very shameful in our society; we are very judgmental/in

contempt to what we call lazy people; they are parasite of society). It can be plain fear of becoming sick; an emotion so strong it actually manifesting as sickness in the body. Desire, excuses and fear; that is signs of an “I” at work in the midst of the world; making a reality appear not caused by nature alone.

c) Another example is the psychiatric diagnose “Obsessive Compulsive Disorder” – also called OCD. Here the inner logic at work becomes very plain; the patient can very intelligently and rational explain why it make perfect sense to live/act the way they do – even though it reduces the quality of their lives. They keep making sense of it even though everyone else around them survives without such an extreme behavior. To give a real-life-example: A man believes that deadly germs are everywhere. He cannot use any toilet. He cannot eat or drink of anything he hasn’t washed up himself. He cannot eat anything he is not absolutely sure is safe and fresh - not contaminated in any way. One day in the fridge, and it is spoiled for him. All his focus and energy go into surviving the germs – it takes up all his time. He loses friends and family, because he demands others to be considerate beyond what can be expected. He understands, but he cannot stop his behavior. He is imprisoned in a belief-system which has taken full control; he is imprisoned in his mind.

There are all kinds of phobias and fears of different kinds and degrees. I read in a pharmacy-pamphlet once that we all have traces of this behavior in us. Of course; we all have minds... We just let it take control and become a tyrant to different degrees. So, it is probably pretty common, and it is so because of the mind’s inner workings; its patterns and beliefs and systems – reproduced by responding or reacting according to the program - sustained by its own inner logic. In bad faith we are holding onto the known and maybe fleeing from the anxiety of change, maybe even believing we will not survive a change – a breakdown of our belief-system and psychic patterns. But a breakdown can be a breakthrough; breaking out of that which is misleading and controlling us. Maybe painful, but liberating! Or maybe it won’t be as dramatic as we believe...

Kierkegaard describes the process of change brilliantly in his philosophy. (: Chapter 1) Our lowest level is ignorance. This is a very unconscious way of being (“aesthetic”) – following the bodily need and wants – not questioning anything. It is a very instinctive and



determined nature. This is not to be human at its fullest potential, so such a human being (which is a very common state) has an inner despair. But they are not conscious of it at all, or of one self in general, pretending all is well. (Sartre would call this being in-itself in bad faith.) But when consciousness arises all hell can break loose, because we see our lies – we see that we are not all we can be/what we really are. We see our weakness and our potential powers, and we feel shame, anger, resentment and despair over being what we are not - without being able to reach all that we can be – believing it to be impossible. Actually Kierkegaard says that if one stays at this level of consciousness, not being able to go back into forgetfulness and self-diversion, and at the same time not being able to go further, one probably will commit suicide sooner or later. It will be unbearable to be in this “half-conscious”, agonizing place; knowing without being able to *live* the knowingness.

In this perspective it is very understandable why most people choose to maintain and protect their beliefs in bad faith – reproducing and confirming it with their stories, scenarios and imagined fears. They stay imprisoned but safe, caught up in thought-patterns and a mind-set they themselves have made (or internalized based on behavior and stories from others). But at the same time we hear stories of people getting out of it all the time. And they very often recommend to others: “Do it! Wake up! The freedom is worth every minute of pain and agony!” The beauty of being human is that we *can* overcome any fear and throw ourselves into such an unknown abyss of change. We can make nothingness appear in the seemingly determined world – also the world of our minds. Those with OCD can confront their fear refusing to react the way they usually do; refusing to follow that which has become their “instinct” (program); refusing to follow their compulsion. No matter how much anxiety they experience in the process. They learn that it is safe to break the inner “rules” they have made out; they send new signals to their minds – falsifying the belief. But change cannot happen for them by rational thought and knowledge alone. Their belief-system is so logically sound that it is not easy to penetrate and change it with arguments. *Experiencing* that it is safe is what brings changes to their lives.

The workings of the mind are brilliant and manifold. It has been our survival and rise above nature (with its creative ways). But it can also become a prison and limitation. We can rationalize almost anything; making sense of/find good reasons for/argue for whatever

belief or behavior we choose. It has nothing to do with “truth”; the mind can have its own inner logic not matter the fact of the matter. We have looked into some cases of personal beliefs, but this can take over a society also – like one united belief-system ruling the masses. For instance during the ruling of Nazism in Germany, the extermination of Jews was either overlooked in bad faith by those not involved - or rationalized to the degree that it made perfect sense for those involved in the acts. Many bought into the logic, because it was very well argued, and with no fault found in the belief-system no one was questioning it or opposing it. No “evil” was involved – just another example of rationality... working against us instead of for us.

**d)** Let us look into Sartre’s example of the precipice again (Sartre:54) - investigating the mind from his perspective for a minute. To recollect: I am facing a precipice. Looking at it from the perspective of being-in-itself, the precipice presents itself to me as to be avoided. Nature sets in - the body/mind reacts, programmed as it is for survival. Its reflex/instinct probably will be to back up/avoid the danger, and if I’m pretending to be determined by the fear as an in-itself I will probably avoid the precipice automatically. But *I want* to pass – despite the danger - even though I have to use a narrow path with no guard-rail. And as a being-for-itself I can override the instincts and continue. Call it “a strong psyche or will”, because I dare doing it... But doesn’t this indicate that the psyche/mind is freedom? Not necessarily. The fear can decide my actions even though I choose to go on. The way I precede will then be colored by the danger of death represented by the precipice. I will be extra aware – I will avoid loose stones etc. “I am given to myself as a thing; I am passive in relation to these possibilities; they come to me from without; in so far as I am also an object in the world – subject to gravitation – they are not *my* possibilities.” (:54) I apprehend myself as a destructible transcendent in the midst of transcendent, as an object. I react, even though it is a reflective reaction; I perceive the danger and I reflect on how to avoid falling in. This is a very important point; reflection as such doesn’t make me completely free. I can perceive of my self as free, but my actions are determined by foreign causes; the fear; the precipice, the end. So I am not completely free. My possibilities as a human being are manifold and beyond what nature/instincts/reason “dictates”, but in this case I let my instincts rule my behavior in the face of fear. I *could* have chosen to *not* pay any attention to the stones in the road, or to

run, or to be absentminded which would be against any survival-purposes. Amongst my possibilities of “inconsistent conduct” is also the act of throwing myself over the precipice. That would have been to raise above the “logical possibilities of the situation” – beyond that which my body (with its instincts and wants and needs) and my mind/psyche (with its patterns and logic and knowledge and memories) dictates me to do.

But is it possible to transcend our psychic patterns and belief-systems on a permanent basis? Many will say no; it is a central part of our mind - we cannot function rationally without it. And many claims for instance; “once a drunk always a drunk”. We can never totally shake off our past and our “settings”. According to Sartre the pre-reflective, immediate experience in freedom (consciousness) is before knowledge (mind), but the mind is so quick to step in that we miss that part of our being-in-the-world. Instantly we take the experience and “filter” it – makes it “food for thought” instead of just feeling – being – living it. We analyze and organize and compare and deduce and judge and value and interpret it. Are we trapped in these inner structures and habits? Or do we have the ability to rise above that which determinate us? We have it in us - the ability to let nothingness slip in - questioning everything. Therefore we *can* overcome the habits and beliefs, and see our true freedom as conscious beings.

But this is not common sense, because people actually are not very aware in their everyday lives. They are programmed and determined; they are in their mind or focusing on everything but themselves. Most people are not very aware of much – they just do what they do without questioning it. They are not aware of their physical body. If they were they probably would have treated it better. Instead they reluctantly drag it around with them every day. They are not aware of much at all – missing the beautiful sunset on their way home from work; submerged in their thoughts as they are - thinking about work or family or dinner – maybe daydreaming about next week-end or holiday. They’re not *consciously* aware of their surroundings there and then – really *experiencing* it in the now; feeling and smelling and hearing what’s out there. All the beauty and enjoyment they miss – these simple pleasures and possibilities which are all around all the time.

e) This reminds me of Peter Railton's theory on "objectified subjective interest". (Railton 1997) There he describes a man craving for milk (subjective interest), even though this isn't in his best (objective) interest. He is dehydrated; water would give relief. But he is not "fully informed" (not listening to his inner knowingness? Haven't learned?), so he drinks the milk. And he gets even sicker. Humans do this all the time with their body; getting addicted and fat and sick – sometimes for life (diabetes for instance), and sometimes our lifestyle even kills us. We wouldn't do this if we were determined by our body. But if our will was wise/well informed we would not do it either. We are doing the opposite *both* of our nature and of our good will<sup>29</sup>! It is our mind which craves for something. And we follow the mind rather than the body and the "I". But Railton is optimistic on behalf of human nature; we can learn from our experiences and become less ignorant and confused and determined by wants (and beliefs) and start doing what actually are in our best interest.

It is a natural process - searching for balance; it is the way of the nature if we look at it: It evolves and changes and balances itself. I find Railton's way of viewing the process very plausible: We are in-the-world and thereby we exist in the nature of things. Our evolution is quite natural. Human being is a coexistence of consciousness and nature. We actually just have to listen – or feel. That will make us conscious of what is in our best interest – both as individuals and as participants in a community, Railton claims. We can learn to live according to our well informed nature. Maybe we could say that this evolution is the "I" becoming more aware instead of human beings following the rules and demands and beliefs of the mind; *I am* listening to my body and what I am experiencing. Railton underline also that the informed being is not a person submitting to an "ought"; a rational *belief* in what is good for him (like they do in diets, which seldom work over time...). It is the whole complex of being-in-the-world which is informing. In the end the 'ought' does not do the work anyway, so why bother... Hobbes claims this, and I find his reasoning very plausible:

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<sup>29</sup> I borrow this expression from Kant: A good will is good without qualification. It doesn't have to obey outer rules – it is autonomous and intrinsically good; its value is wholly self-contained and completely independent of its external relations. Goodness has become the persons "second nature" one might say. (Kant: *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) )

"In *deliberation*, the last appetite, or aversion, immediately adhering to the action, or to the omission thereof, is that we call the WILL; the act, (not the faculty,) of *willing*. And beasts that have *deliberation*, must necessarily have *will*. The definition of the *will*, given commonly by the Schools, that it is a *rational appetite*, is not good. For if it were, then could there be no voluntary act against reason. For a *voluntary act* is that, which proceedeth from the *will*, and no other. But if instead of a rational appetite, we shall say an appetite resulting from a precedent deliberation, then the definition is the same that I have given here. *Will therefore is the last appetite in deliberating.*" (Hobbes:509-510)

The will - our choosing - is not of our mind with its reasoning. Our will is the *act* – not the thought. We can rational deliberate all we want, but in the end our will can overrule this. That is the fear of the gambler; he can decide not to gamble anymore, but he knows deep down this decision does not determinate him. If he chooses he can overrule the decision. The spontaneous "I" is our freedom to rise above anything, so it is the spontaneous act ("the last appetite") which is our will. According to Hobbes man cannot do anything against the will; if we do something different than we deliberated (for instance we smoke even though we decided to quit), it is our choice to go against the rationalized decision and follow the last, spontaneous decision in the now moment. The will is not of the mind – it is a movement of "the heart". Every act has some kind of deliberation to it - it is not irrational or arbitrary, but rational considerations in advance differ from the will in the moment of action.

To be human is in other words not *all* about science and knowledge, rules and regulations. As a matter of fact, the human is deprived of a very important part of themselves when they make it all about facts and figures – valuations and judgments. There's more to us than this. I call it consciousness.

### **(iii) The mind and consciousness**

I want to stress that I don't intend here to depreciate the mind altogether. It is an invaluable feature of human being; it is a precious and impressive tool. All I'm saying is that it should not rule us/our lives. The more I learn about the human being in all its complexity, the more I see the possibility of more of an equilibrium body-mind-consciousness. It's evolution. To give you an idea of where I'm going here, I will let Nietzsche speak for a moment. He also objects to the overrating and overruling of the mind-controlled areas of our lives, like science (truth and false), morality/religion (good and bad), psychology (the rule of a shameful subconscious/Id opposed to a pretty mechanistic, passive, automatic, reflexive

Ego) etc. They are *belittling* man, but nonetheless; man has accepted these “truths” (belief-systems) and made them their own. Not only that; man also values the division as “higher nature”.

“Let us conclude. The two *opposing* values “good and bad”, “good and evil” have been engaged in a fearful struggle on earth for thousands of years; and though the latter value has certainly been on top for a long time, there are still places where the struggle is as yet undecided. One might even say that it has risen ever higher and thus become more and more profound and spiritual: so that today there is perhaps no more decisive mark of a “*higher nature*”, a more spiritual nature, than that of being divided in this sense and a genuine battleground of these opposed values,” (Nietzsche:1253)

Nietzsche objects to this. Our higher nature is not these inner conflicts – this cleavage/disruption (which often victimizes and alienates us). We are unity of being and sovereign masters of our own lives:

“If we place ourselves at the end of this tremendous process, where the tree at last brings forth fruit, where society and the morality of custom at last reveal *what* they have simply been the means to: then we discover that the ripest fruit is the *sovereign individual*, like only to himself, liberated again from morality of custom, autonomous (for “autonomous” and “moral” are mutually exclusive), in short, the man who has his own independent, protracted will.” (Nietzsche:1257)

“Is this even possible today? – But some day, in a stronger age than this decaying, self-doubting present, he must yet come to us, the *redeeming* man of great love and contempt, the creative spirit whose compelling strength will not let him rest in any aloofness or any beyond, whose isolation is misunderstood by the people as if it were flight *from* reality – while it is only his absorption, immersion, penetration *into* reality so that, when he one day emerges again into the light, he may bring home the redemption of this reality; its *redemption* from the curse that the hitherto reigning ideal has laid upon it.” (:1278)

I see similarities between this being and the pure pre-reflective consciousness of Sartre’s being-for-itself. Sartre’s core human being in the world is *not...* clever or deliberate or judgmental or moralistic. Sartre’s genuine human being is pure, immediate *experience...* before the mind sets in. It is *living* life in the midst of the world. It is an unveiled, open, receptive and expressive being; spontaneous and intuitive – from the heart. “The unity of being in the For-itself is explained by the ecstatic character of its being; it has to be in full spontaneity what it will be. The psychic, on the contrary, “is made-to-be.” (Sartre:188-189) The immediacy of the “I” is authentic, genuine and free; not masked, covered, false – living a lie. This is where we want to be according to Nietzsche too, and I do agree; it would make the world a better place...

But how is this possible? How can something immediate and spontaneous make us autonomous and sovereign? It seems to be so... irrational or arbitrary, some might object. But as Hobbes pointed out; it is not; we *never* are irrational! I will say human behavior goes in two directions; either we are nature - ruled by instincts and reflexes, which cannot be something arbitrary or else nature would not “work”. And all theories of biology would fall. Or we are conscious to different degree; there is some kind of an experience of an “I am – I want”. Hobbes addresses the latter; the deliberating human being (which is the opposite of being irrational and arbitrary). And what we will find in our fully conscious immediacy is not chaos – *unity* rules there! The unity of the “I am”. Nature speak and act with “one voice”; the instincts and reflections just “do it” – no fuss – no questions. We usually don’t, because we have some kind of belief in an inner division and opposition. It is our cultural inheritance. The inner cleavage is not there by natural law – it is all in our mind – programmed and impressed. If we let go of the idea, we no longer have any reason to doubt our inner voice – our will – the movement of our heart (to use Hobbes’ words).

Then we have reached the “I” hidden behind the cleverness and beliefs of our minds – behind all “knowledge”. We distrust ourselves because of all the lies we are fed (Nietzsche is in particular rebelling against the Christian idea of the sinful nature of human beings) - beliefs which make us doubt ourselves. I believe there is much doubt in most semi-conscious human beings: “Will this be a good or bad act? How will the others react? Should I ask someone? Or will I look stupid then? How can I know what to do? What do I feel like doing? Should I do this or that? What is right and what is wrong? What are the rules? What do they think of me now? How can I be better – do better?” We believe we have to think all the time; control our self and make sure we are acceptable. We have lost much trust in ourselves - our human ‘instincts’ – the unified human ‘voice’; our feelings – our intuition – our spontaneous knowingness. How can we trust this? Why should we? We are not beasts! We are cultivated human beings... So we rely totally on our clever minds, which might not be as rational as we like to believe. All these strange beliefs! All these unnecessary doubts! After my revealing of all the shortcomings of the mind; maybe we should look for a better tool? It is there, and I call it ‘consciousness’.

But why should we trust this immediate being more than the knowingness of our mind? Maybe it will be *worse*; anarchy and chaos and destruction. First some general remarks on the difference between immediacy and knowingness: Science is actually also starting to see the rational mind and the immediate self as two different/separate features of human being according to Peter Railton: "Support has grown in psychology for a 'dual system' model of the mind, in which two systems – one fast, intuitive, affective, and often unavailable to introspection, the other slower, more deliberate or stepwise, and more consciously assessable – run constantly in parallel." (Railton 2006:25) According to Sartre it is the "fast", non-reflective consciousness which renders the "slower" reflection possible: The pre-reflective cogito is the condition of the Cartesian cogito. This self-consciousness is "the only mode of existence which is possible for a consciousness of something". "Just as an extended object is compelled to exist according to three dimensions, so an intention, a pleasure, a grief can exist only as immediate self-consciousness". (Sartre:10)

The difference between mind and consciousness can also be explained through temporality: Being-for-itself is *not* temporal and predictable; it is not a being-in-itself – like an object or some other nature of necessity; cause and effect; past and future. It is an absolute self-conscious presence in the Now moment. It is being and living – not thinking and knowing. It is a free and spontaneous "acting out" from an inner awareness and knowingness. It is "fast and intuitive", to use Railton's words. No re-active patterns; no outer or inner determination. It is *me* questioning that which is. It is the pure, immediate and free experience not limited/contaminated by the "threats" of the past or the future. The "Now" is freedom from temporality. No ruling systems and patterns – no ruling of past experiences. The past becomes like a picture on the wall; it is not an inner nature controlling us. It is a being-in-itself put out of existence by nothingness (if I so choose). We can perceive it, but it cannot touch our being if we don't choose it. There's ruling of an already set future either; it is not yet to be; it is potentials and possibilities – nothing finite which has to be with necessity (like the belief in fatalism).

Sartre claimed that Descartes and Kant did not go deep enough into "the heart of being" - to the intuitive and spontaneous 'me' who "have at each instant a pre-ontological comprehension of (the phenomenon of being); that is, one which is not accompanied by a



fixing in concepts and elucidation.” (Sartre:18) I’ve discussed Descartes earlier, and I am in fact uncertain about this notion “natural light” – this clarity at the core of our being – the self-trust he is speaking about (Descartes: part III); can this be similar to Sartre’s being-for-itself? Maybe... Kant was also right in so many respects; “[Man] should not be led by instinct, nor be provided for and instructed by ready-made knowledge; instead, he should produce everything for himself.” (Kant:31) Autonomy is the goal - not being lead/determined/controlled by our immature inclinations, or by guidance from/beliefs of others. That is self-mastery – both in practical and theoretical life. I couldn’t agree more, but at the same time Sartre might be getting even closer to an accurate explanation of the pure immediacy of our being.

This immediacy can be explained in the following way: Sartre can count his cigarettes without knowing he is doing so (or; I can drive the car from A to B without knowing what I’m doing). It is in other words possible *not* to have “a positional consciousness” of the activity and still be doing things very accurately. In other words; some kind of conscious activity must be going on. Yet, at the moment when these cigarettes are revealed to him as “a dozen”, he has now a positional consciousness of the adding activity (suddenly I realize I have been driving, because I have arrived at B; “how did I get here?” ...). Reflection has no primacy. And it is not reflection which reveals the consciousness – it is the activity. “Every positional consciousness of an object is at the same time a non-positional consciousness of itself”. (Sartre:9) I become conscious of myself having a want at the same time as I become conscious of the chocolate. At this moment no reflection is going on – it is a primary and simultaneous meeting between me and me and the world.

Let me try to clarify what this immediate knowingness is through some examples: If you want to go out of a room, you usually know where the door is. You don’t have to *think* about it – rationalize or analyze or deduce or conclude about where the door is. Only blind people think about where the door is. People who have eyes and light, they don’t think. They simply get up and go out! They never give a single thought to where the door is. They don’t start groping for the door or hitting their head against the wall; investigating it until they get it right. It is intuition; they just know it – sees it, and there is not even a flicker of thought. They simply go out. This is our immediate experience of the world, and it is guiding us the way

Railton explain so excellent. We just have to listen. So much information is there - clear and sensible, but we are blind and deaf – complicating things – wanting to figure everything out with our minds.

I used to be like that. And I hated to shop, because I could not make up my mind. I had so little self-awareness that I did not know what *I* wanted. Instead of going into the shop and letting my eyes run over the clothes and *feel* what I liked - letting something appear from the background as likable, I was looking at each thing - thinking and wondering and rationalizing and comparing with others and good taste and fashion and what I've heard was 'right' for 'my type' etc. I wasn't in touch with my inner knowingness at all. Instead I was letting everything else decide for me – not allowing *me* to be expressed/come forward – not allowing *my* taste and style. I would probably have been more comfortable and secure if I had. I would have felt better about myself – being *me*. Many believe to be independent in their choices, but I claim much of it is in bad faith; man is to different degrees following fashion and others – influenced by advertising and social norms and friends etc. Totally unconscious people do not find this problematic at all. But if consciousness starts to rise, we become aware of how much energy is being used on taking everything to mind – into consideration. My awareness came forward as I started to question the way I was living and doing things and that opened up the possibility for finding my own voice and becoming truly authentic and autonomous – sovereign and genuine – intuitive and confident.

This intuitive knowingness is there, and we actually are using it all the time; it is our point of presence in the world; it is our awareness of everything that is going on out there and in our bodies. But experiences of the immediate and spontaneous often stays unconscious and automatic; we don't let it through to our minds because we are too much in the past and future, our patterns and beliefs, our logic and analyzes. We are not aware of what is accessible to us beyond the mind; what is *really* going on here and now – in us and around us. We think too much and use our intuition and feelings too little; complicating things and finding problems where there are none – inventing enemies and dangers where there are none – missing possibilities and solutions because we think there are none. We are at our heart much wiser and loving and trustworthy than we give ourselves credit for.

*I am* in total balance as nothingness engaged in the world in the now. The “I am” is there. It is our human being – our consciousness. We can all reach this point of presence – this immediacy in the world. We just have to choose it – letting go of the ruling of the mind which holds all the dichotomies and unbalances of the world; the fear and hate and despair and doubt; the past with its shame and guilt or pride, and the future with its expectations and predictions - maybe terrible ones. All this fear, which creates new rules – new barriers and walls – more control and limitations. This is the workings of the mind – not the “I”. But I am the one choosing – also when I choose bad faith. But the fact that I choose it is just a sign of how totally free I am. Nothing determinates me. I can choose to continue to be powerless and in doubt, or I can choose differently any moment – choose mastery and freedom and trust as a unity of being. People change their way all the time. We are never determined and decided once and for all.

Now I will address the question directly; what if everything only gets *worse* if we “loose our minds”? And my counterclaim is this: What we actually loose are only our limitations. Someone might object to that too; there are at least two kinds of limitations impossible to transcend as human beings – we cannot choose whatever we want: Some things are not *possible* (our physical limitations; we cannot grow wings etc.) and some things are not *allowed* (our social limitations; or else we become like beasts?). I have already answered the first objection in a previous chapter: For instance; we cannot grow wings but we can make flying machines of all sorts now. There are no limitations if we use our imagination and creative abilities! A rock in the road doesn’t need to stop us; we can see that as a possibility. For example for getting an overview and take a picture – or we can go around or find some other ways to deal with it. It can be a possibility to take a new rout discovering new landscapes. No matter what we don’t just stop like a rock rolling to a stop by another rock. We question the situation and find solutions (if we are not in bad faith and just give up of course – as if we were a rock...).

I cannot choose not to bleed if I cut myself with a knife – it is cause and effect of the material world. But I can choose whether I will be a victim of it or not. I choose my attitude towards that which I experience. The eyes are receiving information and sending it to the brain; that is cause and effect. But it is *me* who choose what to focus on of everything hitting the eye. It

is *me* making sense of it; I decide what kind of knowledge to make of it – how to value it – what kind of experience to make of it (beautiful or disgusting or scary?). Consciousness is neutral – it is before the valuation – it is the pure point of contact between an “I” and the world; the immediate, spontaneous, intuitive. At this point I can choose whatever I want. I can choose whether I will like this spider or hate it. I can choose whether this drug is irresistible or dangerous for me. Or I can stay neutral. That might also be possible; we don’t get engaged in everything around us. It depends on our focus. The brain doesn’t feel or choose anything. The body has sensations, but it is *me* who loves or hates – fears or trusts, and who discern between care and abuse – good and bad (or chooses not to – not to involve the mind in the experience). The body releases dopamine or endorphins to cope with a situation of stress or damage in a physical part. The effect of this bodily function is that the muscles relax – the tensions go – the blood flows better – the healing/balancing is optimal effective. This is physical facts; but the pleasure of it – that is me; my experience – if I so choose. I can choose. I can choose to make the body release more of the good stuff by activity, imagination or drugs. Or I can do like the frigid woman: She was thinking of the household duties to avoid experiencing the sexual pleasures of the body – diverting her self by escaping to the mind. The body probably released pleasurable hormones; she just chose not to be conscious of it. Or I can choose just to let it be. That is freedom!

The social restrictions can be even more difficult to get around; here our beliefs are very, very strong. Letting go of control and limitations is associated with chaos and anarchy. This is especially true if one is of the belief that we still are cavemen at the heart of our being; that an unconscious and destructive nature haunts us; that we are the cancer of the earth; that we are doomed by God and sinful from birth or something like that. We have to control ourselves or “all Hell is loose”. Maybe it is in the end all about belief, with no hope for reconciliation with our self and each other. There is no absolute proof here, so all I can do is to argue the best way I can for my view, which is a strong intuition verified again and again by all the goodness I see in the world - humanity craving for peace and happiness for all. That is what lies at our hearts the way I see it – behind all the mind-created wars etc. As I have pointed out earlier; there is much which indicates that unbalances are because of our psyche and the beliefs of our mind. There we make up our myths and stories about “us and

them” - heaven and hell, and all kind of worst-case-scenarios which makes us angry and fearful and aggressive and controlling – victimized and powerless and not able to love our self (and thereby others). Unconditional love is in fact a very rare phenomenon. We negotiate – give-and-take. It is an exchange; a trade; demanding and owing; not taking responsibility or being the one carrying the burdens.

We want so much but we don’t succeed in our efforts. Not on the personal level and not on the social level. Still we fear change. We don’t want what is, but we don’t dare to let go of the known. We don’t dare the nothingness... We want predictability. But that is just repetition of what has been - that which we don’t want. The nothingness is our only choice if we want real change. What do we really risk by it? As I have argued for earlier: There is no either-or here. We don’t “loose our minds” if we let go of our belief systems. We do not depend on them to be reasonable human beings. We don’t get into chaos without them - with no direction or meaning or knowledge. We just become more immediate – living in the now moment. We become more *living*; more aware and intuitive. All our mind-functions will still be there. Still we will be able to think and sense and rationalize, and make sense of everything and value our surroundings. All our memories and wishes and aspirations will still be known to us. But we will be the master of all of it; we will be in power. We will be in charge of our lives – be the one making all the choices. No automatic, reactive, outer or inner determination; no past pushing us towards the future. Probably most people will not choose very much different than today – they will not want to be anything other than sympathetic and helpful and responsible – participating in the community – taking care of their family and continuing in their jobs. But it will be their free choice from the heart, and thereby a much more unconditional living. It will be because *I want* to – not out of fear or duty – not just unconscious patterns and habits - not because we think we have no choice.

We will in other words still be human, only more ‘evolved’ (to use Nietzsche’s and Railton’s notion). We won’t loose *any* of our abilities! It can be difficult to see it – how we can *know* what to choose if we do not rationalize, analyze, estimate and deliberate. How can the intuitive and spontaneous and apparently “mindless” be the foundation of good choices?! Again; I am a human being *in the world*, so the whole world is there for me -including everything I have ever been, experienced and learned. I am not determined by anything, but

*everything* is accessible to me. I can choose freely how to relate to it – how to use it. In fact; we have much more knowledge stored than what we can remember through a conscious, mental activity. That is why sometimes it helps to *stop thinking* when we try to remember; *then* the answer appears. It is really a false belief to think everything has to be thought through. I sit at an exam and know I know the answer – it is there - “on the tip of my tongue”. Then I just stop trying to figuring it out for a moment. I take a deep breath and I’m just letting the mind go – letting it flow. Then it comes to me. Because I am not in the belief that I cannot remember or that I have to think all the time during the exam; *that* belief would stop the flow. I trust myself; knowing the answer is there. I am allowing it to come forward, and it does. Every time; if it is part of my knowingness – if it is something I have heard or seen or learned or read. This trust is the reason why I never am very nervous when I go to an exam. I know I can reach everything I know.

In freedom (without ancient beliefs systems ruling) the flirting man and woman can play out their passion without fear of judgment - knowing they are not doing anything wrong; not inflicting any harm to anyone. The woman will be all she can be - knowing it is possible and up to her - knowing she don’t *have to* be serious and limited and ‘respectable’ the way other has defined this. She can come alive! There is no lawful behavior she must submit to – that is just a belief; a ruling belief system placing onto her unreasonable restrictions she didn’t question before. Some might react to her flirting, but she is only following her heart. They are letting *their* belief system rule them; why should she submit to their limitations and judgmental nature, just so that they can avoid feeling resentment because they refuse to give up their belief system? Their reactions and feelings are also their choice. It is the dictatorship of the majority to demand of others (or of the ones in power – for instance priests and mullahs) to be like themselves in all respects.... A flirt between two consenting parties never harmed anyone.

What about the suicidal? In empowerment and freedom I cannot see despair and hopelessness rule man anymore. There will be no ground for such desperate acts – not seeing any way out of misery. At our heart we will always find solution; we will always be able to rise beyond our psychic patterns and depressive thoughts and hopeless situations. The fully conscious person will be able to see that he/she is not the past, and that the future

is wide open with all possibilities accessible. Of course; this scenario is a bit far off – it is not that easy to shake off everything in an instance. But standing by the void about to throw oneself in; that *could* be the crucial wake-up call changing everything about how the person views him/herself in the world.

The working man might become aware of his life being miserable – an inner despair coming to the surface. It has always been there, but he has been in bad faith. Now he is awakening to his freedom of choice and possibilities. This freedom doesn't have to be anxiety. The worker probably feels anxiety as long as he *cannot see* the possibilities of his freedom. He cannot see how he and his family can survive (physical and social) if he doesn't continue in his line of work. That has been his only possibility, and suddenly a whole world opens up to him with nothing concrete to hold on to at first. It can seem like chaos indeed. But new solutions will arise through the new knowingness waking up – through the outer and inner guidance of nature – through the new awareness and creativity – through his newborn belief in him self. He cannot fail... Heidegger would probably argue that we can only be in that state of nothingness for a short while – then we have to go back to the ordinary life of “das man”. The natural inclination of the masses is to want things to be “fixed,” to want some stability, and to want to go back to the familiar and to restore as much as possible. I agree on that. But I also agree with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and their optimism; it is not too much for us – it is consciousness-evolution. Not in the form of being extraordinary divine super-humans or something like that, though. Sartre grounds it all the way he explains it. It is about being what we are not and not being what we are. We don't have to be what we are forever and ever. It can take some time to overrule the old programs and beliefs, but it is possible – to be in a world of possibilities – without anxiety or having to fall back into being-in-itself in bad faith.

Artists often use human abilities different from thought and reason. I once took a drawing class, and something fascinating was revealed to me through some of the exercises: If I drew something using my mind and its definition of the thing it usually became very bad; superficial and generalized, and with very little likeness to the original. A finger looked like a sausage... But then I learned to see (yes; I had to learn it). The trick was not to *define* what I drew; not *think* about what it was. That made me draw what was really there and not just

the defined object in general. I saw lines and shadows and actually *experienced* the object very differently. The result was a great resemblance with the concrete instead of something stereotypical. I learned then the importance of perceiving, listening, smelling, watching and experiencing; being present in the now moment – completely and utterly – not letting the mind get in the way. There is much to learn from the pre-reflective, spontaneous, inspirational and immediate point of contact between being-for-itself and being-in-itself. It opens new horizons!

When we stop thinking so much, our intuition can flow freely. Brilliant and genius people throughout history is said to combine their rational skills with creative activity. Letting imagination be on “the team”, so to speak: Equilibrium. Not being anything but being aware of everything; being able to use *all* our abilities and recourses. Not necessarily all at once; ‘equilibrium’ paints a picture of a flow – a rise and fall; high tide and ebb. We have our body and mind, our intuition and awareness, our memories and knowledge, our imagination and creativity. And at the heart of it all we have our point of presence – not limited or defined by any biological inheritance or psychical patterns or rigid belief-systems or rules and regulations of the society. It is all there for our use if we choose so, but this openness and freedom of the Now moment gives room for new ideas, possibilities, solutions and creations. Nothing is determined, absolute and unquestionable. If we let our consciousness through we will not automatically regulate/filter everything with/through our mind. That will just be reproduction of the past – not getting us further. It is the ones who question things who make changes and growth possible – not the followers. The mind is a very important part of us and it serves many very important functions. But it does not have to have all the saying – we do not have to be confined to it. We can go beyond! To believe otherwise is to be in bad faith.

Kierkegaard talks about an internalized divinity, but it is possible also to look at the infinite less metaphysical: It can be described as our infinite *possibilities* – our creative abilities and imagination which can manage almost anything; flying like a bird, staying under water like a fish, going to the moon, move at higher speed than any other living being, overcoming deadly diseases and getting artificial body-parts and change our sex and getting a new heart and... There seems to be no limits. But the ones who come up with such ideas and solutions



usually think “outside the box” – outside old belief systems (not listening to those who say it is impossible). They use their imagination and creativity which is without limits, but at the same time they stay grounded enough to get the ideas manifested in this world with its physical laws and limitations – using the materials of this world. It is in my eyes being “infinite in the finite” (Kierkegaard:187-192) – without having to involve a divine power outside of us. It is *our* doing – as human beings.

But, don't we need some kind of control/box/standards – especially moral ones? After all we do also make war-machines and atom-bombs and fabrics and cars - potentially destroying our earth and all of humanity. Our sexual behavior spread AIDS, and we abort life etc. We are not sharing fair what we make; some have more that they can use while other are starving. We are experimenting biologically without knowing how it will affect the balance on earth. It can seem like we do not handle our freedom well. The question is if this is our freedom, or if it is the “cleverness” of the mind and belief-systems which is at work here. Of course I cannot be sure, but my intuition and experiences tell me that this kind of unbalanced creations is of the mind: Everything we do out of fear, or in a master/slave-game, or with some sort of agenda, are of the mind. The mind is not in the now; it thinks consequential – from the past towards the future. The mind is not neutral; it thinks good and bad – win or loose – us and them. The “I” is neutral and free flowing and in the now moment. There is nothing to protect or win or gain there - if we choose, and more balanced solutions are bound to come up. Consciousness opens up for viewing things very different than what the past has told us; what ours or others belief-systems are telling us; what future worst-case-scenarios are telling us. Consciousness is creative beyond reason.

## **V: CONCLUSION**

I have been on a journey into human being, through Sartre's theory and my own investigation, readings and reflections, and I've come a long way in understanding man and what lies at the heart of our being. The answer is two-fold, the way I see it now; the common and the possible – the possible being more than just a fantasy or theory. I base this claim

both on personal experiences and on stories of others rising above common beliefs. It is an empiric fact in my view. And I also found it on well-argued theories from existential philosophers.

It appears to me to be a journey of man (seen very generally): Society going from suppressing and devouring - to allowing individuality and free expression. Man going from being very fragmented with very little self-awareness - to a complete and united self-mastering "I am". Man in society going from being fearful or humble 'followers' (with a few 'rulers') and with a conservative and repressive reproduction of what has always been - to everyone being empowered creators of their own lives in freedom and expansion for everyone towards their fullest potential. It is a change from limitations to possibilities. But how free are we really today, and how much of it is bad faith? We believe ourselves to be free because we are free from many outer strains. But I wonder how clearly we really see and know ourselves and our inner limitations. When I see the world today I see man evolving towards freedom, but we have not yet fully reached that place of full conscious being. I believe in man, though; we will get there. We have the potential for empowering ourselves and living good lives together in freedom. Just look at history! We are getting there.

The unique "*I*" has to come from the inside; from self-awareness, self-acceptance and self-empowering. We have to trust ourselves on our deepest level – beyond everything which defines us. Being present in the now moment; in the point of presence where *I am* nothing and everything – where *I am* neutral and in equilibrium - where all my resources is available at every moment, and *I am* the one choosing what and where and when. *I am* the Master of my life, and at my core – in this now moment - *I am* as innocent and pure as a child. I am not my past or my circumstances or a set future. And I am not the other; let them evolve in their own pace their own way. If everyone first and foremost looked after themselves, we would reach our state of free togetherness much faster. Everyone will be free because no one is limiting the others; the attitude will be complete acceptance and mutual respect. I think this is possible because of I know that at the heart of human being lies "I am that I am" – pure and simple.

It is fascinating to see how we are trying freeing ourselves through being-in-itself; through money and things and others: “If I get a big house and a fast car and someone who loved me and a sailboat and a cottage”, *then...* But we don’t feel any better. Maybe for a moment we get a “high”, but then things fall back to normal, and we have to find new things to buy or do - in hope that *this* will bring me the happiness and peace I search for. But it never does. Instead we live in fear of loss. And we start to secure ourselves and mistrust each other. Walls and wars... Now we have tried this approach, to the limit of what humanity and our earth can handle. More and more people start to realize this; “it is time to change – to turn inwards instead - looking after our selves and each other”. There’s the key – the treasure; at the heart of our being – in the nothingness. That is truly a beautiful paradox! No-*thing* is there; it is not in the things we find that which we search for. At the heart of our being are self-mastery and self-creation and self-love. No-*thing*; just a point-of-presence; experiencing – being – *living*!

At the heart of human being is trust. I believe Kierkegaard is right about that. Not trust in any outer force of some sort, but in *ourselves*: Trusting our capacity for making the right choices if we use *all* of our faculties – not relying on one part in particular disregarding the intuition, creativity – the unified voice of our nature and our selves in the now. Our consciousness promotes balance and unity; there we can find creative solutions which will be for the best for all. It is part of our human nature; if we let what’s in our heart/at our core speak for a moment - and just listen.

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